ON THE HEIGHTS

B. AUERBACH

VOL. 1.

TAUCHNITZ GERMAN AUTHORS

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ON THE HEIGHTS

BY

BERTHOLD AUERBACH.

TRANSLATED BY

F. E. BUNNETT.

Second Authorized Edition, thoroughly revised.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ON THE HEIGHTS.

FIRST BOOK.

FIRST CHAPTER.

MATINS were being sung in the chapel of the royal summer residence.

This residence, not far distant from the palace, was situated on a slight declivity in the middle of the park. The eastern side of the hill was planted far up with vines, and its summit crowned with magnificent beeches. In the park there were maple-trees, plane-trees, and elms, spreading out their rich foliage by the side of pines and fir-trees; even the Siberian stone-pine had been brought here from the highlands, and, by its thick needle tufts, showed that it had become indigenous to the soil. On the level meadows stood single lofty fir-trees, with their rich growth of foliage to their very top. Shrubberies of various leaves and flowers presented a refreshing appearance. Artistic arrangement was evident in the whole design.

The paths were well kept, the flowers were wet with morning dew, the birds sang, the freshly mown grass was rich in fragrance, there were swans and curious ducks swimming on the lake, and gay flamingoes on its banks; in the centre of the lake a fountain

threw up its high column of water, which splashed down again in flaky clouds of curling foam.

A clear woodland stream, fringed with elders and weeping-willows, and with many a bridge thrown across it, rushed down from the mountain side, ran into the lake, and flowed out of it again into the valley towards the river, a glimpse of whose glittering surface flashed here and there through the shrubbery.

Under the trees, and wherever the view was choice, there were placed ornamental tables, chairs, and seats.

Not far from the chapel a distinguished-looking man was sitting. His dress was carefully arranged, and the thick hair on his head was as white as the linen which he wore round his neck. His blue eyes, bright with youth, were fixed on the distant landscape, beyond the valley with its woods and fruit-trees, and beyond on the neighbouring hills, to the pointed tops of the lofty mountain-range, whose rugged heights rose sharply against the blue sky. He placed by his side a book with which he had evidently been engaged, and gave himself up to the peacefulness of the hour.

The great door of the chapel was open, the deep tones of the organ might be heard, a little cloud of incense floated forth and then melted away in the morning air.

This distinguished-looking man was physician to the king. He was a Protestant, and therefore had not gone to mass.

Coming out from the vine-covered verandah, a beautiful female figure in a full white dress now appeared; she held a sunshade over her, and she wore a simple morning cap with blue ribands. She had rich golden hair, and her fair face, slightly flushed, beamed with

youth and beauty; she seemed the personification, as it were, of Aurora.

The physician heard the rustling of the dress, rose quickly, and bowed.

"Good morning, dear sir," cried the lady, who was followed by two others a few steps behind. Her voice was not clear; there was something in it of that violoncello tone which is not attuned to express joy, but rather the deep feelings of the heart.

"It is a brilliant day," continued the lady; "but doubly sad for those who have to spend it in a sick room. How is our Countess Brinkenstein?"

"Your Majesty's lady of the chamber may pass an hour to-day in the open air."

"I am delighted to hear it. Oh! it is so wonderfully beautiful here, no one should be sick or sorry."

"Your Majesty's lady of the chamber is specially fortunate, now that she is again able to fulfill the happy duties which await her."

"Speak softly," said the queen, suddenly; for the organ in the chapel had ceased, and the mystery of transubstantiation was taking place. "Oh, my good friend and counsellor, I want to confide something to you."

The two ladies drew further back, and the queen walked up and down with the physician on the open square in front of the chapel.

"Nothing must be kept from the doctor," began the physician, "only a short time ago your Majesty said that you would trust me with a stethoscope to examine the emotions of the soul."

"Yes," said the queen; and she blushed to the

very roots of her hair. "I had thought of asking you for spiritual counsel, but it won't do; I must settle all that with myself alone. But I have a request to make of my physician."

"I await your Majesty's commands."

"No, not here! I mean —"

Suddenly the chapel bell sounded. The king came out; he wore the simple dress of a citizen, without any mark of distinction; the gentlemen and ladies of the court followed him. The gentlemen were all dressed as commoners, for the most part in the comfortable costume of the mountains, improved by modern taste.

The king, a vigorous manly figure, and of upright bearing, waved his hand in the distance to his consort, and at once approached her; his suite withdrew into the background, and softly exchanged their morning greetings. The king spoke a few words to his consort, she smiled, and he also bowed smilingly with youthful grace; then he offered his arm to the queen, and they went towards the pavilion, the ladies and gentlemen following, now chattering together merrily and without constraint.

A young lady of the court, with a tall fine figure, and brown eyes and brown hair, joined the physician and pressed his hand heartily. She wore a simple light-coloured summer dress, a loose open jacket, and under it a full chemisette; a leather girdle of the natural colour, set with steel knobs, encircled her waist; her movements were graceful, the expression of her face was half roguish, half serious. "May one be allowed to know," inquired she of the physician, "may one be allowed to know, what book you have

considered worth reading out of doors on this beautiful morning."

"It was worthy to be read, but it was not read," replied the physician; and he held out to her a small volume. It was Horace.

"Oh! Latin!" said the court lady; her voice had something in it shrill and saucy, like the notes of a chaffinch. "Latin — then that is your mass!" The physician briefly explained how happy the ancients were in compressing such solid and lasting matter into so small a compass. They entered the hall and placed themselves as they chose, for there was no order of rank at breakfast. In general, too, in the country, where all uniform was laid aside, many of the incumbrances of etiquette were dispensed with.

Nothing is more cheerful than a party of merry disengaged people at breakfast; all the magic power of sleep's refreshment is still in the man; he was alone, now he is in company; in the whole feeling there is something invigorating and refreshing to the creature like the morning dew on nature.

No servants were present at breakfast, the court ladies waited, and an unconstrained, almost familiar tone prevailed. The physician always drank tea, which he made for himself; the brown-haired court lady invited herself this morning as his guest, placed herself beside him, and poured out a cup for him. At her left sat Colonel von Bronnen, the king's adjutant-general, almost the only one present who might be observed as wearing uniform.

The talk was loud and confused, — men's minds were also in morning toilet.

"Oh! to-day is Sunday!" said the brown-haired lady.

A shrill burst of laughter followed the remark, and the queen inquired the cause of it. The physician informed her of the discovery of Countess Irma of Wildenort. The queen also smiled.

"I thought," said the king, lighting his cigar, — he alone smoked in the salon, — "I thought all days were Sundays with you."

"Yes, Sire; but only here," answered the countess merrily, and shaking her rich brown hair. "Since I have had the honour of being with your Majesty, where there is always cake on the table, every day is Sunday to me; but in the cloister, Sunday was distinguished by cake, so I have always to discover here when it is Sunday."

Von Schnabelsdorf, the counsellor of the embassy, who had only recently returned from Spain, and was awaiting new employment, told the physician, to whom he sat opposite, that shortly an interesting work on the history of the Sunday, or rather of the Sabbath, would appear by a friend of his in Madrid; he had, moreover, himself contributed some ideas to it.

The king, who had caught this conversation, inquired what these ideas were; and Schnabelsdorf informed him that seven being the fourth part of the lunar month was the natural division, and that the Sabbath was itself older than all positive religions. He understood how to support all he said with quotations, and by so doing to mention his famous friends.

The information of the learned counsellor was followed by a good deal of light pleasantry, until the queen rose. She made a sign to the physician, the king again gave her his arm, and they went together

through the verandah to a beautiful seat, placed under a weeping ash on the slope of the pleasure-ground.

It was a pleasure to see this fair royal pair, so stately and noble, and the queen was doubly beautiful, for just at this time she harboured a double life.

The queen sat down, the king placed himself beside her; the physician, without waiting a command, moved a seat in front and sat down opposite to them.

"Now," began the queen, "I must have a talk with you; I must tell you of a pain—"

"Would you not rather be alone?" inquired the king.

"No, you must be here too. I want to ask once more whether I may be allowed myself to nurse the child, which God grant may be born in health?"

A scarcely perceptible glance from the king told the physician what reply he was to give.

"Your Majesty," he began; "I have already had the honour of pointing out to you the superstition of the belief, that beauty is preserved by the simple fulfilment of the duty of a mother. A feeling truly beautiful induces your Majesty to express this wish. It is, however, impossible to grant it, both for your sake, and for that of the child. The duties of a queen, the necessary deportment, the indispensable state functions, the various emotions of the mind — all these allow it not. This higher degree of cultivation produces nervousness, which is thus communicated to the child, and clings to him for life."

"I beg you, dear Matilda," interrupted the king, "not to torment yourself with this wish. Consider the welfare of the prince."

"Do not always speak of a prince! Promise me, you will be just as happy if a princess —"

"I cannot be that — not just as happy. I can't bind or force myself to be that; but happy, happy from my heart, I promise you, if you and the child are healthy."

"Well, then, I must have a nurse — I am even now envious of her, for she will take from me so many of the pretty looks and caresses of my child — but let it be so, I will submit."

"And what is the pain you were complaining of?"

"It hurts my conscience to deprive another child of its mother. Thousands have done so, I know — but whoever commits a wrong, does it for himself alone, and does it for the first time in the world. Still I submit. This one thing, however, I cannot yield; only an honest married woman out of an honest family shall be the foster-mother of my child. I should have no peace in my mind if I deprived an already destitute child of the only thing it possesses — a mother. I am not now asking as to worldly regulations and established customs. Is the poor destitute child, born into a hostile world, to be robbed of the only source of love left it? If we have, however, an honest married woman, we still deprive a child of its mother, and injure the life of another — it is hard that, in spite of better knowledge, any one is compelled to do wrong — yet I submit to the necessity. But the child of the mother whom we take, is under the protection of its family; it has a father, perhaps an honest grandmother, and careful brothers and sisters; a home of love shelters the little head —"

"Your Majesty," exclaimed the physician, full of enthusiasm; "your Majesty, at this moment in thousands of churches, prayers are being offered up for you, and millions of voices are responding their amen."

"Oh God, what duties are thus imposed! One should be more than a human being to bear it — it depresses me."

"It must not do that, your Majesty; it should elevate you! At this moment, the aspirations from a thousand lips become a cloud, wafting you upwards. This is true humanity, when he who is protected, guarded, and preserved upright, has compassion on the unprotected, the unguarded, and the fallen, and casts no stone against him. It is one of the secrets of nature, how much of such feelings is transmitted to the unborn child. This child must be a noble, beautiful being, for he will derive from his mother the purity of human love."

The king had taken the hand of his wife, and he now asked, "You know nothing, then, of the law? It is not only a family-law that the princes and princesses of our house should be born in the royal palace — for which reason we remove to-morrow to the capital — but it is also a court regulation, that only a married woman may be wet-nurse to a prince."

"And I have tormented myself so about it! I will in future pay attention to the court regulations, for they contain so much that is beautiful."

"Your Majesty has created this one anew in your own soul," interrupted the physician; "that only is a free and sacred law which has become living within us."

"Very fine and true," said the king — his cigar fell, he recovered it again, and then said, "Excuse

me, dear sir, but will you have the kindness to order them to bring us some cigars?"

The physician went in, and the king immediately said —

"Matilda, I pray you, was that all that you had on your heart? I have observed for some time that you have had something on your mind —"

"Yes, I have something on my mind, but I cannot tell you what it is, till it has become perfectly certain; it is nothing but love for you. Ask me no more; you will soon know it of yourself."

When the physician returned, the king was sitting alone under the ash-tree; the queen had retired.

"Was this admiration a medical consideration?" inquired the king, with a darkened brow.

"No, your Majesty; it was my free and hearty opinion."

The king looked down and was silent for some time; at last he said, rising, and making a movement with his hand as though he were casting something far away:—

"So the queen wishes to have as wet-nurse some young wife from the highlands, belonging to an honest family. Would there not be time for you to travel there yourself and choose one? Do you not yourself come from the mountains? That would be — but no, you must not be away now. Send Sixtus, the court physician; he shall go from village to village, and give him the most accurate instructions. He can even propose several, and you can choose out the best, and we can dismiss the others, and — but do all this according to your own judgment, only despatch the court physician forthwith."

"Your Majesty shall be obeyed."

SECOND CHAPTER.

"You look so beaming!" said the Lady Irma, as she met the physician.

"I may well do so," replied the physician, "for I have seen something divine. I have seen a pure human soul unveiled, — excuse me a moment," he added, as he passed into an adjoining building, and ordered the telegraph official to inform the court physician immediately that he must prepare for a week's journey and come hither; then he returned again to the countess, and related to her all that had passed.

"Shall I tell you my opinion?" inquired the countess.

"You know that such a question is never answered in the negative."

"Well, then, I must tell you, it was much more beautiful in the old times; then royal children were born in some retired palace. Quietly as a secret . . ."

"You are in everything," interrupted the physician, "the true child of your father. My good friend Eberhard in his younger years was full of such mad fancies, but there was a bashfulness at the same time about him which often suddenly surprised one."

"Oh tell me of my father! I know so little about him."

"I also have known but little for a great many years — you know that he completely broke with me on account of my residence at court; but at that time, during the period of our youthful enthusiasm . . . "

"Then you too were once enthusiastic?"

"But not so much so as your father. When I see

you thus, it seems to me as if his ideal at that time had been realized. When we — I was then a young military doctor and he a still younger officer — when we then painted imaginary pictures of the future, he never devised the ideal of a loved one — of a wife; he always leapt over the intermediate stage, and imagined only his ideal of a child, and especially of a daughter, fresh and tender, and yet careless. When I see you now, his ideal is before me."

"My father then had only the ideal of a child?" said Irma, meditatively, and looking full in the physician's face; "and yet he allowed his children to grow up among strangers, and I must hear of him from others instead of knowing him myself? But I will not now speak of myself. Dear sir, I have a presentiment of the queen's secret; I think I know why she is so quiet and absorbed —"

"My sweet child, if you have a presentiment, and that, too, with regard to a royal secret, I advise you not even to trust it to the pillow on which you rest."

"But if it could profit the queen that you should know it? You ought to be her director."

"One can only direct those who will be directed."

"I only wish to ask you to have an eye upon certain symptoms. Did the queen say nothing when here outside the church she heard mass going on? Was she not frightened at a sound? Did you not remark a certain inclination —?"

The physician made a sign with his hand that Irma should not continue speaking, and then he said —

"My child, if you would live correctly at court,

do not guess at things which are not revealed to you; but, above all, do not allow yourself to remark —"

"Correct, and always correct," said Irma, laughingly, and her beautifully-chiselled lips quivered.

"You are a productive nature, and no productive nature belongs to a court," added the physician. "You wish to let your personality take the place of given forms, and it won't do. Look," he continued, in a more lively tone, "look at this counsellor Schnabelsdorf, he wastes himself sooner than he imagines; he is always proffering something, always preparing something, he is cooking and baking and stewing all his knowledge for the company, and his memory is an everlasting would-be display. Watch him, and you will see that before a year is past, people will be tired of him. If one wishes to be and to remain acceptable, one must let oneself be sought after."

Irma assented, but she plainly remarked the effort to change the subject, and again reverted to that which she wished to speak upon.

"Tell me," — she asked, roguishly — "isn't it true, if one makes a false step and injures oneself in doing so, we should call it a transgression?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, you know the queen is in danger of injuring herself by a transgression, perhaps irrecoverably —"

"I would prefer —" interrupted the physician.

"Yes, you would prefer? When you say that, you are always going to blame."

"Right. I would prefer if you would leave the queen to tell her secrets herself. I thought you were a friend of the queen's —"

"Yes, so I am."

"Well, and having once been your morning preacher to-day, I will give you another warning. You are in danger of becoming one of those ladies who have friends but not of their own sex."

"Is that a danger?"

"Certainly. You must have a female friend — you must, or a defect lies in your nature. Such isolation gives a false direction to the whole being — an unconscious or a conscious pride. If among the many ladies here you cannot gain a friend, the fault lies with yourself."

"Still I may have a male friend? A friend like you?"

"I wish you no better."

Irma silently approached the physician.

They came again upon the slope in front of the castle.

"Do you know this pleasure-ground is trimmed up every Saturday with false hay?" began Irma.

"I must request less wit and greater clearness."

"Ugh — how official!" laughed Irma. "Well, you shall hear. The queen once said that she liked the smell of hay, and now the head gardener has this pleasure-ground mowed at least once every week; but as stubborn nature doesn't give hay so quickly, other hay from some distant meadow is brought here in the night to dry — and then they say that princes at the present day are no longer deceived."

"I see nothing wrong nor laughable in the matter. The head gardener belongs to those who consider themselves as the providers of enjoyment for their masters, and —"

"Providers of enjoyment — what a charming expression! I must not forget it. And then you maintain that you have no wit. You are exquisitely spiteful! Providers of enjoyment!" And Irma laughed heartily, and looked more beautiful than ever when she laughed.

The physician found it difficult enough to bring her back again to conversation. As soon as he tried to be serious, she looked at him so roguishly and laughed so heartily, that he was obliged to laugh too. It was not until he at length said that he had hitherto given her credit for being able to follow a discussion, and not merely to catch at a little sparkling wit, that she allowed herself once more to be led willingly like a pupil by the hand of the master; and the physician well understood how to bring her gradually back to the consideration he desired.

"My lady," said a servant who entered — a tall, fine man, with a large hooked nose and raven-black hair — "my lady, her Majesty the queen expects you in the music-hall."

Irma turned away, and the physician watched her as she went with a look full of meaning. A few moments after, from the castle down the mountain-slope, and far into the valley, might be heard the full clear metallic voice of the Countess Irmengard von Wildenort.

"Eberhard, too, sang enchantingly," murmured the physician, as he turned his steps towards the castle. He paused, however, as he saw the prebendary who had this morning officiated at mass, also entering the music-hall.

The morning was so beautiful and mild, all na-

ture so happy in itself, everything flourished and grew and blossomed in the spot where it was rooted, and man alone was creating new miseries for himself. Could it be possible that the wilful countess had seen aright? But wherefore should the queen desire to leave her hereditary faith?

The physician sat down in the shrubbery and read his Horace.

Before the dinner-hour arrived, the court physician had appeared; and when dinner was ready to be served, he drove away in one of the royal carriages *en route* for the mountains.

In the evening — it was mild and starlight — the court left for the palace; for on the following day the foundation-stone of the new arsenal was to be laid with great military pomp.

THIRD CHAPTER.

The bells were sounding clearly, re-echoing among the rugged mountains, the gurgling waves were flowing over the calm mirror of the vast green mountain-lake, in which the wooded hills, the rocky heights, and the sky above were clearly reflected.

From a solitary church at the end of the lake, the congregation were pouring out; the men were putting on their hats — green hats with blackcock feathers, and were getting their pipes out of their pockets and preparing to light them; the women were arranging themselves, putting on their pointed green hats, smoothing their aprons, and tying anew the fluttering ends

of their silk neckerchiefs. Behind the old women — who are generally the last in the church — came a handsome young couple; the wife tall and matronly, the man slim and knotted in form like a fir-tree. The rough work of the week was evident in his appearance; his pointed hat, which bore no huntsman's badge, was placed awry on his head, he pulled off his jacket and threw it across his shoulder, and smilingly — the smile on his weather-marked countenance was strange to see — he said:

"Don't you see, it's better so? You don't get into the crowd." The young wife nodded an assent.

A group of women and girls seemed to have waited for them; an elderly woman said:

"Walpurga, thou'dst better not ha' come; now when thou knowdst not when the time may arrive, to go all this long way to church; one may do wrong even in good things."

"'Tis no matter," answered the young wife.

"And I have prayed for you to-day," said a young wilful-looking girl, with a fresh nosegay in her bosom. "When the pastor read that prayer for the queen, that God might help her in her hour of need, I thought — what is the queen to me? and there are people enough praying for her throughout the kingdom. So I thought of you at the same time, and said, 'Amen, Walpurga.'"

"Stasi, I know you meant well," said Walpurga, in a cordial tone, "but I won't have any share o' that. One oughtn't to do it; one oughtn't to distort a prayer."

"She's right," said the old woman, "it would be like forswearing oneself."

"So on my account, it will have no effect!" cried the wilful girl.

"There must be something very beautiful," continued the old woman, as she folded her hands, "in being a queen. Millions and millions of people have been praying for her now in all our churches. Such a king and queen must be thoroughly bad, when they are not good people."

The old woman was the midwife; she was always allowed to talk, and every one listened to her patiently. She walked a short way with the man and his wife, and told them accurately where she was to be found at any hour for the next few days. Then she turned away up the mountain to her own home. The other churchgoers dispersed to the different farms, the children always going foremost, the parents following; a group of girls still loitered on, holding each other's little finger and talking eagerly; they, too, now began to scatter, each to her own home.

The young couple were alone on the road; the noonday sun shone brightly into the lake.

They had still almost an hour's walk before they reached their home; and they had scarcely proceeded a hundred paces together, when the woman said:

"Hansei, I think I'd better not ha' let Annamirl go."

"I can run quickly after her; I can fetch her," said the man.

"No, no, for God's sake," begged the woman; "for I am all alone here on the high road. Stay here; it 's already passing over."

"Wait a moment; lay hold of this tree. There!"

And at his utmost speed the man ran into the meadow, seized an armful of hay, laid it on the heap of stones in the road, and placed his wife upon it.

"I am already better," said the woman.

"Don't speak now, only rest. Oh, if only a carriage would pass now — but there isn't a man or a beast to be seen far or near. Only rest there, and then I will carry you home; you are not a bit too heavy for me — I have often carried a heavier weight."

"Will you carry me in broad daylight?" laughed the wife; and she laughed so heartily, that she was obliged to support herself with her hands on the heap of stones.

"You good fellow, I thank you so. But it isn't necessary; I can quite go on again." She stood up quickly. The face of the husband beamed with delight.

"God be praised! There comes the wished-for doctor!" he exclaimed.

The doctor of the neighbouring market-town was just driving round the corner; Hansei pulled off his hat, and begged him to take up his wife. The doctor gladly assented, but Walpurga would not get into the carriage. "I have never in my life driven in a coach," she repeated.

"There is a first time for everything," laughed the doctor, as he helped her into the open calèche; he told the man, too, to get up and sit on the box, but the man refused decidedly.

"I will only drive at a footpace," said the doctor.

Hansei walked beside the carriage, looking happily at his wife.

"It is only two thousand steps further — now it is only a thousand — now so much and so much," he said, half aloud to himself, as he looked gratefully at the doctor, who had been so good as to take his wife in, and at the coach, and at the horse which drew it so patiently; and he kept off the flies from the honest beast, that it should not be tormented.

"Your Hansei is doing a kindness to my horse," said the doctor to the young wife as they drove along. She did not answer a word, and the doctor looked with satisfaction at the man, whom he had long known, for he was the servant to the woodkeeper in the royal forest. Hansei still held his hat in his hand, and occasionally wiped with his sleeve the perspiration from his heated brow. He had a sunburnt countenance, void of expression, and wore no moustachios, for he had never been a soldier; from his temples downwards a shaggy beard bordered his long face, and his forehead was for the most part covered with thick light-coloured hair; the short leather hose showed his strong knees, the knitted stockings with their smart clocks were evidently a gift from his wife, and his heavy nail-studded shoes had already made many a mountain ascent. Hansei stepped stoutly on by the side of the carriage, till at last he exclaimed, "Thank God, we are here!"

The little cottage was situated on the lake, and was surrounded by a small garden; an old woman was standing at the hedge, and she cried out to them, "What, and it's in a coach you're coming!"

"Yes, mother," answered the woman; and then with a thousand thanks she bid the doctor good-bye. Hansei stroked the horse to express his thanks that it had brought home his wife so well.

"Now I'll go at once to Annamirl," he said; "keep me something warm to eat."

"No, we'll have dinner together; I am hungry too," exclaimed the wife, as she put down her psalm-book, jacket, and hat. She was beautiful; her fair blooming countenance was full and round, and thick flaxen hair encircled her forehead. She forced herself to sit at table, and ate in common with her husband and mother But, with his last mouthful on his lips, she despatched her husband on his way.

It was high time for Annamirl to come. Before the fowls went to roost, the Sunday-child was there — a crying fair-haired little maiden.

Hansei didn't quite know from pure joy what to do first — he had really not eaten quite as much as usual at dinner, he had not had the regular rest which he required, and how long it was since he had tasted anything! It seemed as if he could not be yet actually father of a crying child. Hours pass at such times, and they are years long! He cut off for himself a huge bit of bread; but when he got outside where the birds were chirping so merrily, and the starlings looked so trustingly at him, he exclaimed, "There, you shall have it too! you shall know too that I am a father — a father of a Sunday child!" He crumbled away all the soft part of the bread for them, and then threw the crust into the lake, saying, "There, fishes, you feed us, to-day I will feed you." He would have liked to have done something good to the whole world, but there was nothing there to have anything from him, and he did not quite know what to be about. Stop! there was the ladder against the cherry-tree; he climbed up it, plucked cherries and

ate them, and went on eating them, and utterly forgot himself; and it seemed as if he was not eating them at all himself, but as if he was giving them to some one else, and he knew no longer where he was and who he was, and he thought at last that he could never come down from the tree — he felt as if he were bewitched to the spot. Past the house went the telegraph-wires — they almost touched the cherry-tree. Hansei looked at the telegraph, as if he wished to bid it go and tell the whole world that he had become a father. He delighted in seeing the swallows and starlings sitting so happily on the wires, and he nodded to them, "Don't disturb yourselves; I don't hurt any one."

And so he gathered cherries and looked about — who knows how long?

At last, the grandmother called from the window: "Hansei, you can come up to your wife."

He was quickly down; and as he went in to her, she burst out laughing, for his mouth was blue-black, and his face was stained red and blue from cherry-juice.

"Well, you have enjoyed yourself!" exclaimed the young mother; "only leave me a couple of cherries on the tree."

"I will bring the ladder into your room that I mayn't get up it again," said he; and there was much laughing in the little cottage on the lake, till the moon and stars looked down upon it. A light was burned in the room all night, the young mother slept calmly and happily, the Sunday child gave many a little cry, but was soon quieted again.

The grandmother alone sat up; she had only made

a pretence of lying down, but she got up again soon, and sat on a footstool by the cradle of the new-born babe.

A bright star shone over the cottage. It glimmered and glittered, and within the cottage a ray of delight showed itself on the mother's face, a joy as unfathomable as the radiance of the star above — a human being mother of a human being, and one eye watching and seeing it — the eye of Him from whom the two lives have both proceeded. Outside, in the quiet air, it is as if there was a singing and sounding of everlasting harps; and within the room it seems as if angel heads were hovering and smiling everywhere.

The old grandmother sat, supporting her chin on her hand, and looking intently; the light of the star in the sky shone on her face, and her eye was beaming upwards towards the star. She felt as if raised above the world, and she held her breath; the glory of the Most High had descended into the cottage, and shone upon the head of grandmother, mother, and child.

"Mother, how bright the stars are shining!" said the young mother, waking.

"And they shine all the same, when you shut your eyes and sleep. Go to sleep again!" added the grandmother.

All was hushed again, till daylight broke.

FOURTH CHAPTER.

The young court physician, Sixtus, drove in the open carriage to the mountains.

He was a man of agreeable worldly manners; he had accompanied the present king, while he was still crown prince, on his travels; and in the company of the nobles he had increased the easy tone, which he had acquired by a three years' residence in Paris. As princes order their inferiors, and turn service into an obligation, it readily happens that persons in office at court are often hard in reproof upon those inferior to themselves. The court physician had selected a servant whom he knew to be most officious.

"A light, Baum," he called out; and the servant at once held out to him a lighted match from the box where he was sitting beside the coachman. With courteous condescension Sixtus handed him his cigar-case; the servant, thanking him, took out a cigar. The court physician's cigars were indeed too strong for him, and threw him into a cold perspiration whenever he smoked them; but it is a wise rule not to reject a proffered favour.

It was an easy drive along the good road. At the first post-stage the royal horses were sent back, and they continued the journey with extra post horses. The court physician had nothing of all this to arrange for himself. Baum knew and took care of everything.

"Baum, where did you come from?" asked the court physician, as they drove on.

Baum started, but he did not turn round; he behaved as if he had not heard the question; he wanted to compose himself before he could reply: his features twitched, but he knew how to resume at once a modest and innocent expression.

The physician inquired again, "Baum, where were you born?"

A respectful face turned round.

"I am from the mountain, out there, far behind on the frontier; but I have never been at home there," answered the lacquey.

The physician had no desire to inquire further regarding Baum's history; he had, indeed, only spoken carelessly.

The young physician was complaisant towards Baum. Baum was one of the favourite servants at the court, for he always knew how to express by his behaviour how much he respected the high position of everyone else.

"Keep as much as possible in the direct telegraph line," had been the last injunction of the physician in ordinary to the traveller; "give me information every morning and evening, where you are to be found, that you can at once be recalled if necessary."

When Doctor Sixtus, now on his onward journey, looked at the telegraph-wires climbing up the hills and winding along the valleys, he smiled to himself. "I am nothing but an electric spark let off, only my master doesn't know where I fall. But really I am like the fairy of a tale; I bring money and abundance into a simple cottage, for I shall get no rich peasant. Where are you, honest foster-mother?"

The court physician looked smilingly on the wide

landscape before him, and around him in fancy, visions of every kind played, which vanished just as the little smoke of his cigar played around him and vanished in the air.

It was already night as they drove towards a little bathing-village in the mountains.

The servant went on foot up the mountain by the side of the driver; the court physician had told him of the mission he had in hand. They had both had other adventures together in distant lands. Baum now talked with the driver about the healthiness of the neighbourhood, and very skilfully managed, by the way, to inquire about young mothers. He had just come to the right man; the driver's mother was a midwife — her only fault was that she was already dead.

The doctor stretched himself comfortably in his carriage; he had now got a handle to help him in his strange business: he would apply to the wet-nurses in the villages, only they must not be told at once for whom the foster-mother was required, otherwise there would be no getting away. The next time they alighted, he nodded to his servant and said, "Throughout the whole journey, call me nothing but 'Doctor' — nothing else!" The lacquey inquired not why — that was not his business. He never even thought of investigating the reason for himself; he was a lacquey, and did what he was told to do. "He who goes beyond his order is useless," was a saying of the Baroness Steigeneck's chamberlain, and whatever he had said was a sacred law.

Merry doings were going on in the little bathing-place. The dinner was just finished, and country-

parties were being discussed for that day and the following; a young officer in plain clothes and a fat gentleman seemed the merry-makers of the company. There was laughing and joking, and in the background some people were singing to a piano out of tune. They were all in a state of excitement; they had been in the mountains to get rid of ennui, and most of them had here first truly experienced it, for it is only given to few to delight in everlasting Nature from sunrise to sunset, and even in the starlight that succeeds.

The court physician perceived himself happily unrecognised here; and Baum, who wore no livery, and had not even a crest on his buttons, allowed no inquiries. The court physician contemplated the doings of the provincial world with a certain court feeling.

He had no intention of making any inquiries at all in this neighbourhood, for the country round was famous for its goitre.

On the morning he continued his journey to another little mountain-town. The court physician applied here to the local doctor, and travelled about with him for some days, but he met with nothing upon which he could decide; still he put down some names in his pocket-book.

The knightly spirit was fast vanishing in the court physician. He looked into cottages of misery — he saw so much distress and wretchedness, that it seemed like a dream how men of the same flesh and blood lived so unconcerned in palaces. Abroad here, existence was nothing but vain trouble and care — nothing but

a labour to maintain life, so that to-morrow might bring back its work and its care.

"But away with sentimentality!" exclaimed the physician to himself. "It is ever so in this good world. Men are nothing but as the beasts. The deer in the forest lives, and asks not how it is with the bird, and the bird troubles not himself about the frog, except when the bird chances to be a stork, and wishes to eat it! No — away with sentimentality — away with the favouritism of the world!"

The court physician drove round over the mountains, keeping always in the neighbourhood of the telegraph-wire, and twice every day reporting himself. He despaired of the success of his mission, and wrote to his chief that he could find no married woman, although some excellent single ones; he therefore proposed — as the queen could not be deceived — that the fittest of these latter should be married as soon as possible to her lover.

He awaited an answer in the neighbourhood of the lake, for in the local doctor he met a former fellow-student.

The much-scarred face of the burly doctor beamed still with the old student-merriment which they had once shared in common; he was even now ready for anything, and was disposed for any fun; he had at the same time grown tolerably boorish in his manners, and the court physician saw with satisfaction what a different life had been allotted to himself.

Doctor Kumpan — such was the familiar name of the country doctor — considered this journey of his friend as an old student trip, and he drove and rode with him over mountain and valley in search of a

nurse, in which search Kumpan never hesitated to take a circuitous path when he knew that it led to an inn where he could appease his hunger with a good meal; and, what was still more important, his thirst with a good drop — the drops, though, must have been plentiful.

"So many of our institutions," said the doctor, one day, "are based on immorality; our nurse-hunt is another proof of it."

Doctor Kumpan laughed immoderately, and exclaimed:

"So you, too, Schniepel?" it was the court physician's student-name — "so you, too, are a friend of the people after the latest fashion? You gentlemen, with your smartly-buttoned gloves, you handle the people much too delicately. We, who live among them, know them to be something very different. They are a band of rogues and blockheads, just as good as those above them; the only distinction is that they are more honest rogues and more honest blockheads. You would just spoil them with your attention. — But it is well that forest-trees grow without artificial watering!"

Doctor Kumpan gave vent on this drive to all his coarse humour.

"I have it now, what we are hunting for!" he exclaimed at another time. "Do you know what we are really in search of? A provender-mother! It should really be called provender-mother, and I maintain the word 'provender' is derived from the institution of wet-nurses. A wet-nurse is essentially a provider to spare the real mother. When you go home, present my discovery to the academy. It ought to

make me a member, for I deserve it—A provender-mother!"

For three days Doctor Kumpan lived on one bad piece of wit, and this too was productive enough for him.

The court physician found the companionship uncomfortable and strange, and still he was obliged to keep up the old intimacy; he endeavoured, therefore, to get away speedily.

On the second Sunday morning he purposed departing, when Doctor Kumpan exclaimed:

"I could roar for having been so silly. I have her, mother Nature, the unqualified absolute, as the old Professor Genitivus — the son of the famous man — always said, beating his lecturer's chair as he spoke. Come along."

And they drove together in the open carriage towards the lake.

FIFTH CHAPTER.

It was again Sunday morning, and in the cottage on the lake there was much going on. Godfather and godmothers were there; and when for the first time the sound of bells came across the mirror-like lake, like invisible but murmuring waves, a procession moved away from the house. The grandmother carried the child on a soft pillow, over which a white covering was spread; behind her walked the father proudly with a nosegay in his coat; beside him was the godfather, the host of the Chamois — followed by the wife of the tailor Schneck, and other women. A fair-haired boy

also, of five years old, carrying in his hand a two-pronged hazel-rod, had joined the party.

"What are you doing there, Waldl?" asked Hansei.

The boy gave no answer; the wife of the tailor Schneck, however, seized his hand and said, "Come along with us, Waldl!"

Then, turning to Hansei, she continued: "Don't drive the child away! It is always a blessing when a young boy goes to a christening; then the child soon gets a husband, and who knows . . . ." Hansei laughed that there should be a thought already of the marriage of his daughter.

The procession moved quietly on along the road. Presently another good token appeared — a swallow flew by just over the grandmother and the child; and then the grandmother opened the great red umbrella, and held it over herself and the baby.

Walpurga was not yet able to go all that long way to church; she was obliged to remain at home. Her companion, the girl who on the former Sunday had applied to her the prayer for the queen, remained with her.

Walpurga was sitting in the grandmother's arm-chair, looking out through the latticed window, gay with pinks, yellow wall-flowers and rosemary, upon the lake and the blue sky, listening to the distant bells.

"There goes my child for the first time out into the wide world, and I am not with it," said she; "so it is now, and some day I shall go into the other world, and not be any more with it, and yet I imagine I have it always with me."

"I don't know why you are so desponding to-day," said her companion; "if that comes of marrying, I will never marry!"

"Pooh, pooh!" replied Walpurga shortly; it was easily to be seen what she meant by it. After a time she continued with a troubled voice: "I am not desponding. It only seems to me as if I had come afresh to the world with my child. I don't know, I am another being. Don't you see, all my life I have never lain so quiet as I have done all these days — lying there, well and doing nothing, only thinking, sleeping, waking, giving the child its food, and people bringing everything to one . . . I have thought as much about you, as if I had been a hermit in the deep forest for seven years; I think I could talk about it night and day, and yet I don't know . . . What is that?" she exclaimed suddenly; "it seemed to me just then, as if the whole house trembled."

"I don't perceive anything; but you put on such a face that it makes one anxious and fearful. Let us sing, sing together; try and see if you are still our best singer."

Her companion never ceased importuning till Walpurga sang; she began at last, but she soon left off again. Stasi began another song, but Walpurga would not join her; nothing was quite right with her to-day.

"Let us be quiet, I like it best," she said at last. "Don't hunt out all these songs. I want to do nothing now."

The bells rang for the third time. Both sat silently.

After a time her companion said: "It's very good

of the host of the Chamois to give his cart to bring them back again."

"Hush, I hear wheels! that can't be them already?"

"No, it rattles like the doctor's calèche. There he comes, up there by the linden-tree; and there is another gentleman with him."

"Don't talk any more now, Stasi," said the young mother; "let the world go on as it likes."

She sat silently, her head leaning back, looking at the sunny world, which had become so new to her; the grass in the garden before the house was as if lighted up, the lake sparkled with the soft intermingling rays of light, the waves splashed on the shore, a gentle wind carried the fragrance of the pinks and rosemary on the window-sill into the room.

A carriage stopped before the door, a loud knock was made with the whip, steps approached, and the merry doctor's voice was heard: "Hansei! is there no one at home?"

"No, there is no one at home but Walpurga and me!" cried Stasi from the window, and a loud laugh followed outside.

Doctor Kumpan entered the room; he was followed by a stranger, who suddenly stopped and stared round him; he felt involuntarily inclined to bow respectfully, but he quickly recollected himself, and only held himself more erect.

"Where is Father Hansei, the father of the Sunday child?" inquired the doctor.

The woman rose and told how he had gone to church with the child and its godparents for the christening, and would soon be back again.

"Don't disturb yourself; sit still!" said the doctor.

"I and my friend here will be unbidden guests, if we may, at the christening-feast; he is, like myself, a man-killer."

"May I ask what the gentlemen want with my husband? May I not know?"

"The husband cuts the loaf, and then gives it to his wife; that is the custom here in the country, Walpurga, as you well know. We have an important matter to talk over with your lord and husband. You needn't be frightened; it is nothing about the courts of law. I will just tell you this, — you have a Sunday-child; you are, perhaps, one yourself?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Then you are doubly fortunate."

"I think," began the court physician, "I think we might at once speak with the wife; she seems to me a sensible woman, and one who will gladly make both her husband and her child happy."

Walpurga looked round as if imploring help.

"Well then," said Doctor Kumpan, seating himself, "let me tell you all about it. So, Walpurga, attend; sit still, and let me tell you a story. There was once a king and a queen, and the king was good, and the queen was beautiful; and they had a son who inherited goodness from his father and beauty from his mother — it may be a daughter, though, but a son would be better. When the son was born, they said to a bright spirit in the palace, called Doctor Puck, 'Puck, my good Puck, pack up quickly and be off to the mountains; there is a beautiful little cottage on the banks of the lake, and in it there sits a clean and strong and honest mother, and she shall be foster-mother of the little prince who has his father's good-

ness and his mother's beauty; and the foster-mother shall have whatever her heart desires, and shall make her husband and her child happy; and the king and the queen and the prince and —' now look up, Walpurga, see there the man who is the ministering spirit, called Doctor Puck, and he comes from the king and the queen. Have you understood me, Walpurga?"

The young mother leant her head back, and closed her eyes. She drew a deep breath, and made no reply.

Just then Hansei entered, with the sponsors and the child. The mother hastened to her child, took it in her arms, and ran out with it into the garden under the cherry-tree, her companions following her.

"What is it all about?" asked Hansei, looking angrily at the doctor and the stranger.

"Sit down, my worthy Hansei, and let me tell you. I am glad you are here also, mine host of the Chamois, pray remain; the rest can all go away."

Without ceremony Doctor Kumpan dismissed the villagers, who had entered the room out of curiosity; and then, taking a pinch of snuff from the host of the Chamois, he continued: "You must know, Hansei, that this gentleman — make a bow to him — is the court physician sent by the king with the request that you should lend him your wife for a year."

The doctor's insolent tone had almost made Hansei inclined to push him and the court gentleman out of the house — he was already preparing to lay hands on him.

The court physician nodded to Doctor Kumpan, and began explaining how in fulfilling the king's

mission he had gained intelligence respecting Hansei, and that his informers had not known which to praise the most, Hansei or Walpurga. Hansei smiled. Sixtus now informed him of the king's desire.

"I am grateful for the good report," replied Hansei, carefully choosing his words; "I am grateful for the good opinion of the king; I know him well; I have twice taken him across this lake when he was a lad—a merry one, and a huntsman above all. Tell the king I did not think he would have remembered me. But I can't give up my wife — I couldn't do that for her sake, and my own sake, and above all for the child's sake."

He had never before spoken so much at once in all his life; he now wiped the perspiration from his forehead, turned to the table — he was as hungry as a wolf, — and as the cake stood there, beautifully cut, he seized the opportunity, laid hold of a piece, and exclaimed:

"There — this bit shall . . . . ."

"Don't swear," interrupted the host of the Chamois, taking the cake out of his hand; "don't swear! Without that you can do as you choose — no one can compel you."

"And no one will compel you," added the court physician; "may I be allowed to eat a piece of the cake?"

"Certainly, certainly — pray take some. You too, doctor, and wine is there too. Yes, doctor, fourteen days ago it was sad work on that road."

They ate and drunk; at every mouthful and every draught, Hansei's face grew brighter.

"I think, mine host of the Chamois, you could

explain the matter to the man better than we can," said the court physician.

The innkeeper offered Hansei his open snuffbox, and said:

"It would indeed be an honour for our whole village, and for our whole neighbourhood. Only think, Hansei, the king and the crown prince —"

"It is possible that it may be a princess," interrupted the court physician.

"Indeed; then the child is not even born?" said Hansei, and he laughed; but while he laughed the thought passed through his mind — stay, we might as well consider the matter! He laughed again; for with all his simplicity he was rogue enough to purpose turning the matter to the utmost advantage; for a thousand, or indeed two thousand gulden, and who knows whether it might not be made three thousand — they would think nothing of it! Hansei would certainly in his imagination have come up to a hundred thousand, if the host of the Chamois had not again spoken.

"Hansei is quite right in not consenting; very right is he. He doesn't say yes or no; he says nothing at all, for the wife must decide; he is a good husband, he will compel her to nothing! Yes, sirs, if we are but simple peasants, we still know what is fitting."

"It's excellent that you honour your wife so much," said the court physician, and the innkeeper, taking a pinch of snuff, continued:

"Yes, so it is certainly; but in discernment and judgment a wife, if I may venture to say so, is only half a human being. I think, with your permission,

sir, I think we will say no more beforehand, but we will call the wife — she is thoroughly excellent."

In Hansei's countenance there was to be read as much happiness as unhappiness, and as much pride as humility.

"Whatever she does is right!" he said.

He was proud to have such a wife, and yet he feared her decision. He pulled up and down at his coat-buttons, as if he wanted to assure himself that they were all firm. At last, urged by the innkeeper, he went out into the garden and called his wife, who was still sitting under the cherry-tree.

SIXTH CHAPTER.

After Walpurga had run out and had pressed her child to her heart, she again quickly gave it to her companion to hold.

"There take it, I mayn't give it anything now. Oh, my poor child, they want to take me away from you. What have you done, that you should be punished so? And what have I done too? But they can't compel me. Who will compel me? But why do they come? Why just to me? Come, child, I am calm, I am with you, and we won't leave each other. I am quite calm now."

She held her child to her breast and kissed his tiny hand.

Then Hansei came up and said, "When you have finished together, come in!"

The mother signed to her husband to be quiet, and not to disturb the child. He stood silent for a time;

there was no sound from the father, nor from the mother, nor from the child — nothing was to be heard but the starlings in the cherry-tree, feeding their young, and flying away and returning as fleet as the wind. At last, the little satisfied baby sank back again on the pillow, though he still moved his lips.

"Come into the room," said Hansei, more gently and softly than any one would have imagined that the stalwart man could speak. "Come in, Walpurga, we don't need to be rude just now, and it's nothing bad that the people want, and as they can't compel us, we might as well thank them. You can always speak with strangers so much better than I can, so do you speak, and whatever you say and do will be right with me!"

The wife gave up the child to the grandmother, and went into the house with her husband, but she looked often round, and she stumbled at the threshold.

The court physician met her as she entered, and said in a confidential tone:

"My good woman, I should consider it a sin on my part to seduce you into doing what your heart objects to; but I hold it as a duty to counsel you to think over the matter clearly and carefully."

"Thank you. Don't take it ill of me, I cannot do it to my child." She looked at her husband, and added quickly, "nor to my husband either. I cannot leave my child alone, nor my husband."

"Your husband and your child are not alone, your mother is there," interrupted the host of the Chamois. The court physician, however, interfered:

"Pray don't interrupt the woman, let her speak

alone, and express all she feels. Go on speaking, my good woman."

"I have nothing more to say; I know nothing more. Or still, there is one thing more: I have never been in service all my life, except for daily pay; I was born in this cottage, and here I have lived till now, and here did my husband come to me. I never thought of ever going from it — and I cannot. I have never in my life slept in a strange bed. I should die of home-sickness if I was obliged to go away to the town, and for so long; and who would feed my child, and how would my husband live? The king cannot surely wish that we should all die of sorrow."

"I must just say one word," began Dr. Kumpan, casting a glance at the physician. "With regard to your child, we have already thought of that. You have long wanted to have a cow in your outhouse; we will get you one that gives beautiful milk."

"I have her!" burst out the host of the Chamois; and he called from the window to a boy, "Go out and tell my servant to bring down here at once the new milch cow. Make haste! Run! Quick! I really didn't wish to give her away," said he to the physician, and he turned away from Hansei, for the latter knew that the host of the Chamois was trading with cattle the whole year through, both with cows and pigs, and that nothing was sure in his cattle-stalls, and now he behaved as if the cow were a member of his family. "She is my best beast," he continued, "but one must give everything up to the king, and she's a bargain at forty crown thalers." Then turning to Hansei, he said, smiling, "You will get a beautiful plump cow — no empty hide."

"We have not yet got so far as that; but if the cow pleases Hansei, I will buy it of you," said the physician.

"The mother away, and a cow at home!" murmured Walpurga shudderingly.

"I didn't think you were so silly; what an ado to make! You ought to be full of joy, and to fall on your knees and thank God," blurted out the innkeeper.

The court physician pacified him, and the doctor observed, "Happiness and singing allow of no compulsion. If Walpurga doesn't like to go with a good resolute heart, we will go to a house further on; there are others to be found."

He rose and took his hat. The physician also rose.

"When should I have to go? And how long should I have to remain away?" inquired the young wife.

The physician sat down again, and replied:

"When? That can't be decided yet, but you must be ready any day."

"Then not directly? — not quite now? And how long must I remain away?"

"About a year."

"No, no! I can't do it! God forgive me that I thought of it for a single moment."

"Then we will bid you good-bye, and may you and your child prosper!" said the court physician, offering his hand in farewell. Then, in a somewhat agitated voice, he added:

"My good woman, the royal child could not have thriven if you had gone sadly, and had always had sorrow at heart. That it should pain you is in the

order of things; you would be no honest wife and no faithful mother if you had assented at once; and who knows whether I should then have accepted you? The queen only wishes for a woman who has an upright heart, and an honest husband, and a careful grandmother; but she wishes not to inflict upon you grief and trouble. If you cannot therefore go away happily — if you do not feel your heart comforted by the thought that you are doing a benefit to the king's child, and that the king is doing the same to you—then it is better that you should remain at home, and not let the gold tempt you; the money must not tempt you. No, it is far better that you should not do it!"

He was on the point of going. But the host of the Chamois held him back and said:

"Hear me only one word more. Listen to me truly, Walpurga, and you also, Hansei. Well, you have said, 'No, I won't go!' It is honest, it is noble of you, and worthy of all honour. But ask yourselves — how will you go on if you refuse it? To-day, to-morrow, perhaps the day after to-morrow, you will be satisfied; you will take each other's hands, you will kiss your child and say, Thank God we have resisted the temptation; we are still together in our poverty, supporting ourselves honestly; we will endure any trouble rather than separate. But the day after to-morrow, or a week hence — how will it be then? When cares and want come, or even — for we are human beings — some misfortune, and you know not how to help yourselves? Consider, will you not say, If we had only done it? Will you not quietly or loudly reproach each other and say, Why didn't you persuade me? why didn't you decide? I wish not to

persuade you, I only wish to hold before you all that you ought to remember and understand."

There was a pause — the man looked at his wife, and then down on the ground; the wife looked at her husband, and passed her hand quickly across her eyes.

The cracking of a whip was heard, and a beautiful black spotted young cow lowed loud and deep, as from a cave. Everyone was startled; it came in the midst of the silence like the voice of a spirit in broad daylight.

The host of the Chamois swore, and scolded the boy from the window for not having brought the calf too, although it had been already sold to the butcher.

The boy quickly fastened the cow to the garden-hedge, and ran home to fetch the calf. The cow pulled at the cord, and seemed as if she would strangle herself; she groaned and lowed till the foam dropped from her mouth.

"That's only an animal, and see how she behaves!" cried Walpurga.

All the impressive words of the innkeeper seemed lost through the incident of the cow's arrival. But Walpurga composed herself wonderfully. She spoke quickly, without looking at any one, but as if she were replying to some invisible being:

"A human being can do more than a beast!" Then, turning to her husband, she continued: "Hansei, come here, give me your hand! Say, will you be thoroughly satisfied, whatever I do and whatever I say?"

"Do you mean if you say No?" replied Hansei, in a wavering voice.

"I mean, whether I say No or Yes."

Hansei could not speak, but had he been able to have spoken, he would have given utterance to very wise and well-based thoughts. He always looked into his hat, as if he were reading in it the thoughts which were passing through his head. Then he took off his blue neckerchief, and twisted it round as tight as if he had wished to make a ball of it.

As Hansei said nothing, Walpurga continued:

"I can't put it upon you to decide. Only I can do that; I am the mother of my child, and I am the wife and . . . if I go, it is I that have to do it, and I know I can do it. I must repress every feeling that I mayn't harm the child — the other child — and . . . and . . . here is my hand sir, — I say Yes!"

Everyone in the room drew a deep breath. Hansei felt as if something was stinging his eyes and filling up his throat. To remove the sensation he helped himself to another glass of wine and a large piece of cake. What a strange day it was! If only the strangers would go away, that he might have something warm to drink — the morning seemed everlasting!

Both doctors spoke eagerly with the young wife, and Walpurga promised to keep herself easy and cheerful; what she had once undertaken, she said, she would carry out, and God would help to preserve her child, and she would do all she could for the king's child; "what I have once undertaken, I will carry out faithfully, you may rely upon it," she repeated again and again.

Now that she had once decided, there seemed a peculiar power in the woman. She called in her mother with the child and told her everything. The child slept on quietly, and they laid it in the cradle in the room. The grandmother received the whole occurrence as an unalterable determination; she had for years been accustomed that Walpurga should decide in everything, and on this occasion there was the king's wish to boot.

"Your child won't be brought up motherless," said she; "I understand it better than you. We have a cow, and we will take care of it."

The host of the Chamois ran out and brought the cow into the outhouse. The purchase was then concluded, and a good profit gained. He was only secretly annoyed with himself that he had not named its price at ten crown thalers higher. Two crown thalers were added for the boy; these he got out besides, and one of them he could conveniently pocket.

Hansei having previously strengthened himself, felt that he must now show himself also a man. He asked after the payment, and would even have mentioned the great sums he had before thought of, had not the host of the Chamois happily again entered and explained to him that the less fixed upon, the more was got; he would himself have purchased the christening gifts alone at five hundred florins, but one could make no stipulations with a king — he would give all the more.

Walpurga now inquired what she should take with her to the capital. The court physician said she should merely take her Sunday clothes with her, and nothing more.

Many people from the village, who had heard the news had gathered together before the window, and the people going to afternoon service, loitered there also, so that the whole road was full. There was a good deal of laughing, for everyone would gladly have lent his wife for a year to the king.

In the room inside, Stasi was promising to help the grandmother, and she boasted, not without pride, that she could write well, and that every Sunday she would give Walpurga tidings of child, husband, and mother.

Then she brought the plates, for it was high time to begin dinner. Walpurga said that in the next few days all should be well arranged.

"In depriving my child now," said she, "I can give him much more for his whole life."

When she mentioned the child, it gave a loud cry in the room, and she hastened to it.

The two doctors were on the point of leaving with the innkeeper, when a post-horn resounded along the road by the lake.

An extra post arrived; in the open carriage sat the servant whom the court physician had left behind at the nearest telegraph station; he held in his up-raised hand a blue letter. He stopped at the cottage on the shore, and called aloud to the assembled people:

"Shout Vivat all of you — an hour ago a crown prince was born to you!"

All shouted aloud, and again aloud.

An old woman who went by, bent double, turned quickly to look at the servant, and her still bright brown eyes sparkled and shone.

"What voice is that?" said the old woman.

There was something, too, in the appearance of the servant — though it was scarcely observable — as if he had seen the old woman. "Go out of the way, people, that I may alight!" he cried.

"Zenza (Vincenza) go out of the way! The old Zenza is foremost everywhere!" cried the people.

The old woman stood staring, as if lost in a dream; they thrust her aside, and she lost her stick on which she had supported herself. The servant stumbled over the stick, but he went into the cottage without looking round.

The court physician hastened towards him, received the despatch, and turned back into the room. Walpurga had returned to it, and he said to her:

"It is come sooner than we thought. I have here the despatch: this morning at ten o'clock a crown prince was born. I am at once to hasten to the palace with the nurse. Now Walpurga show your strength. We shall start in an hour."

"I am ready!" said Walpurga in a decided tone. She felt herself still so weak that she was obliged quickly to sit down again.

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Both doctors and the host of the Chamois left the house. Stasi brought the soup and the roast meat in for the christening feast, and placed them on the table. The grandmother rose and gave the blessing; the others also prayed, and then sat down. Walpurga first took a spoonful out of the common dish, but no

one felt inclined to eat. Then she filled her spoon again and said:

"Hansei, open your mouth, so, and I will feed you; there, take that, and God bless you! and as I am now feeding you here, and it tastes better than if I were enjoying it myself, think that when I am away, not a morsel will pass my lips that I would not rather give to you and the child. And I only go away that we may all maintain each other in peace and comfort; day and night my thoughts will be with you and our child and the mother; and I will come back, if God will, in health and happiness! And think, too, that God might have taken me to Himself in my hour of trial, and you might have been without me all your life. A wife who brings forth a child, stands with one foot in the grave — you have often said that, mother. Now I am going away only for a year, and you know I am coming again, and just the same as I have been. And now that's enough! Don't make the parting too hard for me, Hansei; help me; you can help me, and you will, I know! You are my support and my help! And keep steady when I am away. Put on your good shirts on Sundays — they lie at the top of the blue cupboard to the left; you needn't now spare them any longer. And eat regularly now; and when you are eating, I shall be eating too. We need strength. By to-morrow morning you will feel reconciled, and so shall I. Now eat! Every time you take a spoonful, I will take one too — so —not so quickly! I shan't keep up with you!" She smiled through her tears and ate.

"And you, mother," she began again, "you won't say any more now, that you are a trouble to us. When

I am away, take the two pillows out of my bed, that you may lie with your head right high — that is good for you. If we hadn't you, I couldn't and I wouldn't go away. Don't spoil my husband too much! and when I come back we will get a little room ready for you, and you shall live there, as the first old peasant in the whole country."

The others let her go on speaking, and when she said:

"Hansei, say something too!" he answered:

"No, go on; my voice I can always hear, but yours not again for a long time, who knows . . ."

He was just going to put a beautiful piece of meat into his mouth, but he laid down his fork on the plate; he could eat no more, and the others could eat no more. The grandmother rose and pronounced the concluding grace.

The time passed quickly by. A carriage drove up to the cottage, the servant alone sat in it; the gentlemen were coming presently. The servant quickly made acquaintance with Hansei. The first step was a good cigar. Baum envied Hansei his lot in having such a wife and in being so successful. Hansei felt himself highly flattered. By the court physician's order, some bedding had been brought into the carriage, so that Walpurga might sit comfortably and be thoroughly warm at night.

"Are you going to drive all night?" inquired Hansei.

"Oh no; we shall be at the palace by midnight. At every station horses have been already ordered by the telegraph — we drive four horses."

"But such quick driving may harm my wife?"

"You may be without a care on that head. Your wife will now be taken care of, as the queen herself."

"When I thus hear and see the gentleman," said Hansei, looking fixedly at Baum, "I scarcely know what comes over me."

"How then? Is there anything so frightful in me?"

"No, no; not at all. But the man I am thinking of was a good-for-nothing fellow. No offence, I don't wish to offend you; certainly not. But Zenza yonder — she stands there by the garden-hedge, looking at us — she had twins; one was named Thomas, and the other was called Jangerl, as they say among us; his name was really Wolfgang; and Jangerl became a soldier, and went to America, now thirteen, fourteen years gone by, and no one has heard anything of him, and see — but you don't take it amiss, do you?"

"No, not at all; what then?"

"Well, that Jangerl, he was like you to a hair; that is to say, not to a hair, for he had red hair, and his face wasn't so refined; but taking him all in all, as the devil did the peasants" — Hansei laughed at his own wit, and the servant laughed too — "taking him altogether, one couldn't but say that you were very like each other. But you don't take it amiss, do you?"

"Not at all," said Baum, pulling out his watch and pressing it, so that the case flew open; it just then struck five by the church clock, and he said:

"Your time here is just an hour behind that in the capital. Is that your father's house?"

"No, I had that house by marriage with my wife;

that is, we are still in debt two hundred florins for it, but the owner of the property doesn't press us."

"Your wife can now buy you another house, and you can thank your good fortune in having such a beautiful wife."

"Yes, that is just why I don't give her up willingly," lamented Hansei. "Well, thank God, a year has only 365 days — though, indeed, that's a great many."

"And nights too!" laughed Baum. Poor Hansei shuddered at this man.

"Yes, indeed — nights too!" said he; he was still obliged to be polite, and to give an answer to everything.

Meanwhile Walpurga had begged her mother and Stasi, to leave her quite alone with her child. There in the chamber she fell on her knees beside the cradle, and covered the pillow with her tears. She wept them out here. She kissed the child, kissed the coverlet, kissed the wood of the cradle, stood up, and said, "Farewell, farewell a thousand times!" She dried her eyes, and was on the point of going, when the door was opened from the other side, and the grandmother entered.

"I want to help you," said she. "When you come back again, you will be doubly happy or doubly unhappy, and you will make us so also."

Then she took her left hand, and continued in an imperious tone, "Lay your right hand on the head of your child."

"What is that for, mother?"

"Do as I bid you. You are to swear on your child's head, and with your hand in your mother's,

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that you will be good and honest, whatever temptations come upon you. Remember, you are a wife, a mother, and a daughter! Do you swear that from your heart?"

"Yes, mother, as truly as God will help me! But such an oath isn't necessary."

"Well," said the mother, "now go three times round the cradle, with your face turned away. I will lead you; don't trip — there, now you have taken all longing from your child; and I will take care of your child, rely upon it!"

Then the mother led her daughter into the room, handed her the great loaf of bread with the knife, and said:

"Cut a piece off! May God bless you, and when you have got there, and are living there, eat the bread from your home first, that will kill all strangeness. There, now farewell."

Mother and daughter stood still and held each other's hands.

It seemed strange to Walpurga that Hansei, forgetting her, went round the garden with the servant. Now he climbed up the ladder and fetched him cherries, smoking all the time; and then he went with him into the outhouse, where the cow stood.

The two doctors came, Hansei was obliged to be called into the room — for only here, and not out there, where there were so many people, would the wife bid her husband good-bye. The court physician thrust a roll of crown thalers into Hansei's pocket, and Hansei then held his hand in his pocket, and would not draw it out at all.

"Give me your hand, Hansei," said Walpurga.

He left hold of the roll of money, and gave her his hand.

"Good-bye, Hansei; be an honest man, and I will be an honest woman . . . and now God keep you — all of you."

She kissed her mother and Stasi, went through the garden to the carriage, took her seat, and did not look up again.

The cow in the outhouse lowed and moaned, but the tones of lamentation were drowned by the merry fanfare of the driver, which he sounded at the servant's order.

The old Zenza stood the whole time leaning against the hedge; many a time she drew her hand across her face, and rubbed her eyes, which glittered and shone so brightly.

When the servant now passed by, she looked fixedly at him, and he asked half snappishly, half confidently:

"Do you want anything, old mother?"

"Yes, I am old, and I am a mother too! Hi, hi, hi!" laughed the old woman; and the bystanders gave the lacquey to understand that she was often not quite right in her head.

"Do you want anything?" asked the lacquey again.

"Yes, to be sure, if you will give me something!"

The lacquey drew a large purse from his pocket. The purse shook in his hand. He opened it and took out a piece of gold. But no, that might betray him — he fumbled long among the gold; at last he gave the old woman the money, and said:

"The king gives you that."

He got up, looked no more about him, and the carriage rolled away.

The people came round Zenza, and said she ought to show what she had got; but she held her fist closed convulsively. She gave no answer, and went away leaning on her stick.

Those who met her, heard her talking unintelligible words to herself, and looking always at the carriage-track. In her right hand she held her stick, the left was firmly clasped, and in it was the piece of gold.

EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The carriage rolled away along the road by the lake, and disappeared to the eye of those watching it, round the corner, by the heap of stones where the hay yet lay on which Walpurga had sat fourteen days before.

A beautiful sunburnt girl, in a shabby half fashionable dress, with a powerful figure, and thick blue-black plaits of hair, went past the carriage, looked with amazement at Walpurga, and only greeted her when she had past by.

"That is the daughter of the old woman you gave a present to!" called Walpurga to the servant on the box. "They call her Black Esther. She'll take away the money from her mother if she does not bury it."

Baum turned towards the speaker, but did not look at her; he was looking away over the carriage at the girl — for she was his sister, and he had given a present to his mother, who had begged of him and

had denied her. Now he sat by the side of the driver, with his arms crossed over his breast; some strong support was necessary, for it seemed to him as if his heart must burst. His whole life passed before him, and he kept repeatedly seating himself firmly, that he might not be thrown from the carriage. Now the carriage drove past a farmhouse where Baum, full twenty years before, had stolen a goose for the first time by his mother's order. The gap in the hedge had grown up where he had then as a slim lad slipped through on all-fours.

Baum's twin-brother Thomas had joined a band of poachers, but Baum had no aptitude for this, and he was glad when he was enlisted as a soldier. He had once been upon duty in the interior of the palace. An old valet had brought a letter from the Baroness of Steigeneck, who was at that time all-powerful; he had a long time to wait, and he amused himself with Baum, and found evident pleasure in him; he invited him to the palace of the Baroness, they drank together in a room below, and were extremely merry.

"Why have you red hair?" asked the old valet.

"Why? Because it grew so."

"But you can alter that."

"How? That can be altered?

The old man gave Baum the necessary instruction.

"And you must take too another name! Rauhensteiner — that is much too hard a name for gentlemen; it is not easily pronounced, especially by those who have false teeth. Beck, or Schulz, or Hecht, or Baum — you must take such a name as those. You know, a dog has no name of its own; it is only called as its master pleases."

"Baum — Baum would please me very well."

"Well then Baum!"

When he returned home that evening, he kept ever and anon saying to himself, "Baum, Baum, — that is easy and short to pronounce, and then no one knows me!" He had sworn to the old valet that he would always remain away from his family. This had happily occurred to him again to-day in his native village; it is true an oath was nothing to him, but it was convenient to keep it, and he appeared to himself very honest in consequence.

Through the interposition of the Steigeneck valet, "Wolfgang Rauhensteiner, surnamed Baum," was written in his military discharge; afterwards he was called simply Wolfgang Baum, and no one knew that the man had ever had another name. He was glad to give up any family interference to which the name Rauhensteiner might have subjected him.

He entered the service of the court, and went at first as groom with the prince to the university, and afterwards travelled with him to Italy. He had previously been to his native place to procure his permission to emigrate, and immediately afterwards he had dyed his red hair black. He was considered in the village to have emigrated.

After his return from his travels he had married the daughter of the valet, and had made himself a still greater favourite among the gentlemen of the court. His behaviour was always discreet, he always coughed behind his hand. He rejoiced in his name "Baum;" he was ready to spare the gentlemen all trouble; had it been possible he would have rid the

language of all hard consonants, that the gentlemen should be free of all exertion.

"There the matter rests," said Baum to himself as he sat on the box by the driver and coughed behind his hand — "there the matter rests;" and his air was firm and quiet, as if he were sensible of observation:

"I have emigrated to America. I should indeed be dead and lost there as regards my own people. My own people! They could do nothing but ruin me, fleece me, and encumber me. Nothing more!" He looked at the people going along the road, and he recognized many. Oh! what a miserable life these men lead the whole year long — no joy and nothing! Just on Sunday shaved and preached to, and the old dirty misery goes on again. He who has once got out of it, would be a fool if he ever even gave a thought of returning again!

While Baum on the box thus revived his long vanished life, Walpurga sat in the carriage swallowing her tears by force; all feeling and thought was taken from her as by a higher power. She submitted patiently.

She looked wonderingly at the streams which here and there came down so rapidly from the mountains, running for a time along the roadside, as if they also wished to see what became of Walpurga. When they drove quickly over the wooden bridges, so that they resounded noisily, and the stream below rolled so wildly, Walpurga clenched her hands tremblingly; she only breathed again freely when they drove away over the smooth road. She looked up to the mountains,

to the houses and cottages, she knew them all by name; soon however they got into a strange country.

At the first station, where they changed horses, a large group of Sunday idlers stood at the post-house. The people looked with astonishment as a peasant woman alighted from the grand carriage. One woman, who was nursing her child opposite under a lime-tree, stood up curiously, and the child turned round; mother and child looked with astonishment at Walpurga. She nodded to them, but heavy drops stood in her eyes, and her throat felt closed. Then they went on again at a quick gallop; the driver blew his horn, the horses stept out; it seemed to Walpurga as if she were flying through the air.

"We are going quickly, are we not, Walpurga?" cried Baum to her as she sat back in the carriage. Walpurga was frightened when she now looked at him; it seemed to her somehow as if the features were cut precisely the same as Thomas's.

"Yes, yes," she answered.

The physician spoke but little with her. He felt the inward emotion of this woman, and it touched him humanly. The consciousness of position, which generally affected him so strongly, had vanished. The woman was something more than a mere instrument, she inspired a sort of human confidence — she had torn herself away with such difficulty. The court physician reflected on what he could say to the woman; at last he found something.

"Do you like your doctor?" he inquired.

"Oh yes; he is such a merry man. He abuses everyone and makes them thoroughly miserable, but the very next moment he'll do any one a good turn

when he can, and rich and poor are all one to him — there's just no difference at all, day and night. Oh, that's really a good man!"

The court physician smiled, and inquired further:

"Do you know his wife too? He has not even shown her to me?"

"Certainly, I know her; she was the apothecary's Hedwig, and they are very good sort of people too; and she is a dear pretty creature, quiet and thrifty; they have fine children, I think five or six — she has a lot to do. He ought to have taken you to his house; it is quite nice inside."

The court physician liked to hear the good report of his friend. He had led, too, the thoughts of the woman to another subject, and had succeeded in so doing; she could now herself see how she could get the better of herself.

So Walpurga sat alone, thinking and looking half dreamingly at the things around her. They passed fields and meadows, then again a village with flowers blossoming on the window-sill, scarlet pinks, and long creepers hanging down; she had just such at home too — and they were gone. Then yonder was the churchyard, the black crosses standing out in the broad daylight, half sunk in the mould; there was music and dancing in the village, and dancing girls and boys came running past the window with glowing faces. And further on they passed fields and woods and more houses again, where people were sitting together quietly and talking, and the postilion's horn again sounded. A child ran into the very middle of the street, the mother sprang after him with a scream, took him up and carried him away; the carriage rolled on, Wal-

purga looked about her, she knows that the people there are now thanking God — and on they still go. There is a boy allowing a solitary cow to graze by the side of the road. Out here there are no more cherries on the trees, they were earlier ripe in the wild plains. And there are large extensive cornfields, waving like the lake; there are none such in the mountains, so far, far up . . . How happy people must be here in the plains, where there is something else to be had than water, wood, and meadow. In the fallow land is a plough, laid aside — as if sleeping over Sunday. The evening advances, lights appear, there are people everywhere; they are at home, and Walpurga is away from hers — on and still onward they go. At the next post-station the court physician does not alight, nor does Walpurga; the horses are quickly changed, another driver gets up. The old horses go with heavy step into the stable, and on they again proceed further and further. Walpurga sees no more, her eyes are closed, she hears as in a dream that they are again stopping, and the horses are again changed, and Baum orders the driver not to sound his horn as the company inside are asleep.

"I am not," said the court physician.

"No more am I! sound away, driver!" said Walpurga, — "forgive me for having reckoned myself as company," she added quickly.

The driver blew his horn, the stars glittered, and again on they went through villages; windows were quickly opened, men had no time to reflect what marvel was rushing by. Then they got into a strong quick trot, the horses putting down their feet as evenly as the thrasher's flail, and the world looked out so

wonderingly in the passing glimmer of the two lanterns of the carriage, and now—in the distance there is a great light to be seen — vast — wide — and above it a dark smoke rises.

"The town is illuminated," cries Baum to those inside the carriage, the horses go on more quickly, and the driver blows his horn more merrily. They are in the capital.

Multitudes were still crowding through the streets, rejoicing; the carriage could only advance slowly.

"It is the nurse of the crown prince!" it was soon reported; and Walpurga was greeted by the merry multitude with loud hurras. She knew not what she ought to do. She covered her face. At last they drove within the fortifications of the castle.

NINTH CHAPTER.

Walpurga stood half staggering in the large interior quadrangle of the castle-yard. There were doors, large windows, broad staircases, coats of arms with wild men and wild animals, and all looked so strange to her in the illumination of the gas-lamps, bright in one part, in another dark and mysterious. Half sunk in a dream, Walpurga stared around her. Old legends rose in her memory how a young mother had been taken in the night to the mountain-spirits in a subterranean cavern, to be bewitched there and to nurse a newly-born babe.

But now she awoke. From the castle-guard, where the muskets were placed in two long rows, and a soldier was pacing up and down, resounded one of

her home melodies, sung in the dear Swiss Tyrolese style.

"The governor of the palace has sent the soldiers wine," said a young man in livery to Baum, as he helped to unharness the horses; "the whole town is drunk to-day!"

Walpurga would have liked to have said that the soldiers should not be allowed to sing so loud; on account of the young mother yonder who ought to sleep. She had no idea of the vast extent of the palace. She was soon to know it.

"Come along," nodded the physician; "I will take you to the lady of the chamber. Keep a good heart — everyone will bid you heartily welcome!"

"I had better take my pillows with me," replied Walpurga.

"Leave all that; Baum will bring the things afterwards."

Walpurga followed the physician. They went up a well-lighted staircase lined with flowers, and Walpurga felt already half ashamed to be coming thus with empty hands, as if she had nothing at all of her own, not even a parcel in her hand. "I am not so poor as that" — said she, almost aloud.

They came into the great corridor. All was lighted up, and ornamented with flowers. Men in uniform went here and there, but not a footstep was heard on the carpets. The under servants remained standing, and allowed the two to pass them. At last they stopped before a door. The physician said to the servant in waiting here:

"Let her ladyship know that the court physician

Sixtus is here, and say that I bring the wet-nurse with me."

Walpurga heard herself for the first time called the "wet-nurse," and she was "brought." It came upon her again as if she were bewitched, but still more as if she were sold. Still she took courage, and suddenly it seemed to her as if she were sitting, as she had so often done, in a boat on the lake; she was plying the two oars with her strong arms; the wind was blowing up against her, and would not let her advance; the waves were splashing and roaring, but she was strong — she held her seat firmly, and overcame wind and waves. She stretched out her arms and clenched her hands, as though she must grasp the oars more firmly.

The servant who had gone in, soon returned, and held the door open. Sixtus and Walpurga entered a large well-lighted room. In an armchair at the table sat a tall thin woman, dressed in black satin. She slightly rose from her seat, but immediately resumed it.

The lady of the chamber was just now at the height of her official importance — for it is no small matter to be lady of the bedchamber at the birth of a crown prince. In the great public records of the day her name was inscribed for all time.

The lady of the chamber, severe as she was to herself, could not fail on this day to be satisfied with herself; amid the commotion of the court and capital she had preserved her own deportment, and regulated that of the whole court — of the king especially, who had shown himself strikingly weak and excited.

She was now resting as after a well-accomplished action. There was one point of vexation still in her mind, but she subdued it; for she had a firm resolve. She always knew what she intended, for she knew what ought to be done.

It was an unheard-of thing that no wet-nurse had been already fixed upon. Many had offered themselves — many even of family; that is, of the nobility who had married lower officials. The lady of the bedchamber considered it an exaggerated delicacy — only thus can the errors of princes be named — that the queen wished just for a nurse from the lower orders — from the peasant class. The maintainer of *bon ton* had therefore resolved to give the post with a decided command to one of her own chosen ones, just when the telegram of the court physician arrived, who had found the *beau idéal* of a peasant woman.

The ill-humour at the queen's proceeding was now directed in anticipation against the still unknown peasant woman, who would certainly bring many disadvantages into the palace. Nevertheless, what was the use of fixed rules and regulations? With consistent measures all would be right.

When the peasant woman was now announced, the lady of the chamber rose, and a noble thought beautified and softened her stern countenance. This poor woman of the people must not suffer and be made unhappy and discontented, just because the queen had this new-fashioned fancy for the people.

The court physician introduced Walpurga, and praised her so much, that she cast her eyes down to the ground.

He then explained in French how much art it

had required to obtain the fairest and most honest woman in the whole mountain. The lady of the chamber also praised the physician in French for his happy success, and spoke with great judgment of Walpurga's healthy appearance. In conclusion, however, she inquired — still in French:

"Has she good teeth, too?"

The court physician turned to Walpurga:

"My lady thinks you won't be able to laugh."

Walpurga smiled, and the lady of the chamber praised the blameless set of teeth. Then she touched a bell which stood on the table; a lacquey at once appeared, and the lady said:

"Tell the Privy Counsellor Günther that the wet-nurse of his royal highness is arrived, and I await him here."

The lacquey went. The lady of the chamber now pressed the bell twice; a tall lady of advanced age, with two long curls like shavings on either side, appeared; and made so profound a reverence that Walpurga believed she would actually sit down on the floor.

"Come nearer, dear Kramer," beckoned the lady of the chamber. "Here is the wet-nurse of his royal highness, who is commended to your special care. Take her now with you to your room, and let her have something to eat. What shall she eat, doctor?"

"Good bouillon soup; nothing else."

"Go with the lady," said the mistress of the chamber, turning to Walpurga, and looking at her at the same time benevolently — "tell her always what you wish, dear child! God be with you!"

The lady with the long curls held out her hand

to Walpurga, and said, "Come with me, my good woman!"

Walpurga nodded a grateful assent.

So even here there was some one who held out her hand to her, and spoke German with her; and good words they were too—the old lady had called her "dear child," and the Mademoiselle even "my good woman." In that French talking, she had had a sort of betrayed feeling; for she was sure that they were speaking of her. She went now, conducted by Mademoiselle Kramer, into the second room beyond.

"Now feel yourself heartily welcome," said the lady; and her plain face became suddenly charming—"give me both your hands. We will be good friends together; we shall now always be together, day and night. I am called the palace housekeeper."

"And my name is Walpurga."

"A beautiful name! I think you will keep it."

"Keep my name! Who can take it from me? I was christened so, and I was called so from my childhood."

"Don't get angry, good Walpurga," said the lady housekeeper, heartily. "Yes, be quite quiet," added she; "and when anything is wrong with you, only speak it out freely to me, and I will then set it right. You ought to be contented and happy. Now, however, sit here in the armchair; or will you like best to lie on the sofa, and rest a little. Do just as if you were at home."

"I sit there very well," said Walpurga, placing herself in the great large armchair. She held her hands folded together on her knees. Mademoiselle Kramer now ordered a servant to fetch at once some good

bouillon and some white bread from the kitchen for the crown prince's nurse. When Mademoiselle Kramer turned round, she saw the stranger crying bitterly.

"For God's sake, what's the matter? You are not frightened, are you? You have no sorrow, have you? Why do you cry?"

"Let me only cry! It does me good! My heart has been long so oppressed. Let me cry. I must be allowed to weep when I must. I did not know what I was doing when I said 'Yes.' God is my witness, I never thought of this."

"What has happened to you? Who has done anything to you? For God's sake! don't weep, or I shall be reprimanded for having suffered it. It is hurtful to you. Only say what you wish, and I will do everything."

"I don't wish for anything — only let me weep. Oh my child! oh Hansei! oh my mother! But it is all well. I will be calm. I have done. It is over. Now I am myself again!"

The soup was brought; Mademoiselle Kramer handed it to her, held a spoonful to her lips, and said:

"Take something, dear, and then you will be better."

"I don't want any broth! Must I be ordered what I am to eat, like a sick person, when I have no appetite for it. If there were anyone in the house who can make porridge, that would be the nicest; or I will go myself into the kitchen, and will make it for myself."

Mademoiselle Kramer was in despair what she should do. Fortunately there was just then a knock at the door. The physician in ordinary entered, accompa-

nied by the court physician. He extended his hand to the woman, and said:

"God be with you, Walpurga of the shore cottage on the lake. You have made a good catch in having come to this house. Only have no fear of the court doings, and be just as if you were at home. Believe me, throughout the world they boil with water, and men are just the same here as they are at home with you — just as good, and just as bad, and just as clever, and just as stupid; that is, the latter know how to hide themselves!"

The physician in ordinary spoke half in dialect, and Walpurga's face became suddenly brighter.

"Thank you kindly! Thank you kindly! I will bear it in mind!" said she in a cheerful tone.

Mademoiselle Kramer now brought forward the all-important question — whether bouillon or porridge. The physician laughed and decided:

"Porridge! Very natural! That's the best! Say in general, Walpurga, what you have been accustomed to at home; you shall have just the same here, only nothing sour and nothing greasy, but otherwise just what you like!"

Turning to his colleague he continued:

"We will keep the nurse to her accustomed food, and then by degrees we will change to other diet. Now come here, Walpurga, let me look into your eyes. I will confide something to you; in a quarter of an hour you are to go to the queen. You needn't be frightened, nothing will happen to you; she only wishes to see you. Now show that your eyes speak truly when they say — we look out through a clever head. Speak very calmly with the queen. If

you have still a longing after your child and your people — and I can well imagine it — keep it under when you're with the queen. You might make her weep, and she might thus become ill. She is very tender. Do you understand me?"

"Quite well, quite well! Oh, I will certainly not do that; I will indeed cheer her."

"No, don't do that either. Be very quiet and composed; speak softly and little; and manage to come away soon with a good grace — she ought to sleep a good deal now."

"I will do all you say — you may rely upon me. Are you going with me?"

"No, but you will meet me there. Now eat something. There — here comes the porridge; eat it with appetite, but you needn't eat it all; eat only the half. But stop, let the soup cool a little. Come a moment with me. You would like to go with me alone?"

"Yes, I think I have often heard your voice before?"

"It may well be so; I am also from the mountains, I have been in your parents' house. If I remember rightly, your mother is from my neighbourhood. Was she not a servant with the freeholder of the estate?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, she is an honest woman. Don't forget to tell the queen that your mother will take good care of your child — that will delight her. I knew your father too well; he was a merry and thoroughly honest man."

Walpurga was happy that her parents were mentioned here, and that others had heard who they were.

She followed the physician who had known her father, as willingly as if he had been himself her father, into the adjoining room. He soon came out again, left the apartment with the court physician, and Walpurga presently returned. She did not look up; and when she at length raised her eyes, she was glad that no one was there but Mademoiselle Kramer.

Her thoughts must have wandered homewards, for she suddenly cried out:

"Oh dear me! I have it still!"

She drew out of her pocket the bread which her mother had given her, and the first thing she ate in the palace was the bread from home, which her mother had baked. Her mother had said that it would carry away all home-sickness, and so it was; with every mouthful she became more and more cheerful.

Seven queens might now have come — she was no longer afraid, and she no longer wept. She went on eating up the crumbs which had fallen into her lap, as if they were sacred things. Then she tried also a little of the porridge.

"Can't I wash my face somewhere, and plait my hair afresh?" she asked.

"Certainly; the court physician has ordered it."

"I don't want an order for just everything," said Walpurga scornfully.

Mademoiselle Kramer wished that her servant should dress Walpurga's hair, but the latter would not suffer it.

"No other hand touches my head," said she; and in a short time she was tidy, and her face almost cheerful.

"There, now I will go to the queen!" said she. "And how is one to address her?"

"'Your Majesty;' or, 'Most Gracious Lady.'"

"I like it better as she is called in our church prayers — 'Mother of the Land.' That is a beautiful noble name; I would not have it taken from me if I had it. Now I will go."

"No, you must wait a little; you will be called."

"That is right. But I have one request — call me the familiar 'Du!'"

"If the lady of the chamber permits, I will gladly do so."

"So here one has to ask about everything. But we have chattered enough now; we will be quiet. Only one thing more — who is the woman hanging on the wall there?"

"That is the queen."

"That is the queen? Oh, how beautiful! But is she still so young?"

"Yes, she is only eighteen years old."

Walpurga looked a long while at the picture; then she turned away, knelt down on the large chair, folded her hands, and softly repeated the Lord's prayer.

Walpurga was still on her knees, when there was a knock at the door; a lacquey entered, and said:

"The nurse of his royal highness is to come to the queen."

Walpurga rose and followed the servant, Mademoiselle Kramer accompanying her.

TENTH CHAPTER.

They passed through the long, narrow, brightly-lighted entrance-hall; a servant with a lantern, in which were two lights, walked in advance. Then they ascended a staircase, over the unlighted vault of the royal chapel. Here were the stuffed seats for the court, and Walpurga looked down over the railing into the large dark hall below. The everlasting lamp alone burnt on the altar, illuminating an image of the Virgin, with a feeble glow.

"Thou art everywhere, and here too!" said Walpurga, half aloud in the gloom of the chapel, saluting the Madonna and her Child as if she were a personal friend. In the soft dusky light, a thought passed through her soul of the eternal divinity of the mother's duty — how it has been glorified through thousands of years in image and song, prayer and sacrifice. She again saluted the image, and walked on. Through the throne-room, through the great dining-hall went Walpurga, uncertain as if she were treading on glass; then they went through more habitable rooms, there were doors nowhere, only heavy double curtains. At last they descended a broad marble staircase, well lighted and carpeted, with gold balusters. Here stood lacqueys and guards. They entered the rooms; they were full of people engaged in eager conversation, but they now looked up as Walpurga passed. In the third apartment they met the physician. He took her hand, led her up to a man in a splendid uniform, with many stars and crosses on his breast, and said:

"This is his Majesty the king."

"I know him, I have seen him before," replied Walpurga. "My dear father has rowed him across the lake, and my Hansei too."

"Then we are old acquaintances. We must continue to be good ones," said the king. "Now go to the queen, and take care that you do not excite her."

He signed a gracious dismissal, and Walpurga, accompanied by the physician and the lady of the chamber, whom she had met here, passed again through several apartments, not a footstep sounding on the thick rich carpets.

"Take care that you don't excite her!" — Not excite her! The words gave Walpurga a good deal of trouble. Why should she then provoke the queen to quarrelling — for she understood nothing else under the word "excite." This driving here and there, up and down, through the passages, through the rooms, the observation of the court ladies and gentlemen, and at last to be admonished by the king — Walpurga did not know what "excited" meant, but she was so now herself.

A green apartment, like some enchanted room hollowed out of some large jewel, at length opened before her. From the ceiling there hung a lamp of green glass, which shed a fabulous light. There, in the large fourpost bed, over which the royal coronet glittered, lay the queen.

Walpurga held her breath. A calm radiance shone on the face of the woman who lay there.

"Are you there?" asked a soft voice.

"Yes, queen! God be with you! You have only

to be quite quiet and happy. Thank God, all has gone well with you."

With these words Walpurga pressed towards the bed, suffering herself neither to be withheld by the physician nor by the lady of the chamber. She stretched out her hand to the queen, and the hard-working and the delicate hand — one as hard as the bark of a tree, and the other as tender as a lilyleaf — clasped each other.

"Thank you for having come. Did you come willingly?"

"I came willingly, certainly; but I did not go away so."

"You love your child and your husband of course heartily."

"I am the wife of my husband, and the mother of my child."

"And your mother nurses and takes care of your child with the utmost love?" inquired the queen.

"Umph!" replied Walpurga.

The queen seemed not to have understood that by this monosyllable she intended to say, "That's a matter of course." She asked therefore:

"Are my words plain to you as I speak?"

"Quite plain; I understand German!" replied Walpurga. "But now, queen Majesty, you must not talk so much — we shall be, if God will, right long and happy together; we will settle everything when we see each other in broad daylight, and I will do everything I can to please you and the child too. I have got over it that I am away from home, and now I must do what is laid upon me. I will be an honest foster-mother to your child — there, you may be without a

care. So now good night. Sleep well, and don't worry about anything. Let me now look at our child."

"It sleeps. Oh eternal miracle, and eternal grace of God! It breathes by my side, and is my breath . . . ."

Walpurga felt that some one was pulling her gown behind. She therefore said quickly:

"Good night, dear queen. Cast away all unnecessary thoughts. It's no time now to be worrying oneself. We shall have time enough for that. Good night."

"No, stay! you must stay a little!" begged the queen.

"I must beg your Majesty —" interrupted the physician quickly.

"Oh leave her a little with me!" said the queen in a childlike tone. "Believe me, it doesn't hurt me when I speak with her. On the contrary. When she came to the side of my bed, when I heard her voice, it seemed to me as if all at once the whole Alpine air, full of dewy freshness, was breathed upon me — that aromatic heathy atmosphere. I could have imagined myself lying on a high mountain, looking out upon the wide and beautiful world."

"It is just this excitement that is extremely pernicious to your Majesty!"

"Well, I will be quiet. But leave her with me only for one moment! I want a little more light that I may see her."

The shade was raised from a lamp on the side table, and the two mothers looked at each other.

"How beautiful you are!" exclaimed the queen.

"That's of little matter any longer," replied Wal-

purga. We are now, thank God, both of us, past the fooleries which can turn one's head. You are a married wife and mother, and I am also a married wife and mother."

The screen fell over the lamp again; and the queen, grasping Walpurga's hand, said softly:

"Bend down over me. I will kiss you — I must kiss you!"

Walpurga bent down, and the queen kissed her.

"There, now go and keep well!" said the queen.

A tear fell from Walpurga's eye upon the cheek of the queen, and the latter added:

"Don't weep! You are a mother, too, like me!"

Walpurga couldn't say a word more, and she turned away.

As she was going, the queen called after her:

"What is your name?"

"Walpurga!" replied the physician.

"And can you sing well?" asked the queen.

"People say so," replied Walpurga.

"Then sing often to my child — to *our* child, as you called him. Good night!"

The physician remained with the queen. He sat silent for a time. He felt he must quiet the queen's agitated feelings, and he had a good and simple resource.

"I must request your Majesty," said he, "to give me back my congratulations. My daughter Cornelia, who married Professor Korn in the university, had a little girl at the very same hour as your Majesty."

"I wish the child happiness in having such a grandfather. You ought to be grandfather too to our little son."

"It is the best congratulation," answered the physician, "to give a man a noble duty. Thank you. But we must now talk of nothing else, your Majesty. Good night."

The physician left. All was quiet.

Walpurga was not conducted back again to the upper room, but on the other side to a very comfortable apartment. She was glad to find Mademoiselle Kramer there.

"The queen has kissed me!" she cried. "Oh, what an angel she is! I didn't think there were such beings on earth."

After some time, when the queen had gone to sleep, two women brought a gilded cradle into Walpurga's room.

The queen had turned round once, when they took the child from her side; she had felt it in the midst of her sleep.

Walpurga breathed three times on the child, before she laid it on her breast. The child opened its eyes for a moment upon her, and then quickly closed them again.

Soon everything in the palace was hushed. Walpurga slept, and the child slept by her side. Mademoiselle Kramer sat up, and the physicians and servants passed here and there through the ante-rooms.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In the village on the lake, or more properly in the few cottages which surrounded the inn of the Chamois, the speedy and almost strange departure of

Walpurga had produced a great commotion. The host of the Chamois knew all about the matter, and he gave it to be understood that he knew a good deal more than people would believe. Of course he put everything in a manner as if he had acquaintances up to the king himself.

The host of the Chamois would gladly have taken Hansei into his inn after the departure of Walpurga. For Hansei was just now as good as a whole band of music.

Hansei, however, after the departure of his wife, had not gone to the host of the Chamois. He promised to come later. He could not now leave home.

He went through the whole house, from top to bottom; and then stood long by the cow, watching her as she ate.

"Such an animal is well off," he said to himself. "We must take care that she has her food, and wherever there is a crib, with fodder in it, there she is at home!"

He went into the room, and nodded silently to the grandmother. The child slept in the cradle; he only looked hastily at it. He sat down behind the table, supporting himself on his elbows, and covering his face with his hands.

"The clock still goes," he said suddenly, looking at the Black Forest clock, which was ticking loudly. "She wound it up."

He went out and sat down on a seat under the cherry-tree. The starlings overhead were merry, and a cuckoo called out of the wood. "Yes, he does the same; he lets his children be brought up by strangers."

Hansei laughed to himself. He looked long in one direction; was it really true that his wife was away? She must be sitting by his side. How can those be so separated who belong to each other?

He stared at the place by his side, but she was not sitting there.

Outside the garden-hedge stood half the village, great and small, regarding him.

The weaver, Wastl (Sebastian), a comrade, who had worked with Hansei for years in the forest, called out to him:

"Thank God, Hansei, your bread has tumbled into the honey!"

Hansei returned the salutation in an unwilling manner. Suddenly there was a loud burst of laughter. No one knew with whom the word first originated; but whatever it was, it passed quickly from lip to lip, and Red Thomas, the son of old Zenza, a strong-boned daring lad with a bare browned chest, said aloud:

"Walpurga is the wet-nurse of the crownprince, and Hansei is the . . . .

The comrade opened the garden-door and came in, the whole troop followed him. They went through the garden, through the house and the stable, looked through the window, smelt the pinks in the window-sill, and sat down on the heap of chopped wood under the projecting roof. The house belonged now to the whole village. When a joy or a sorrow enters a house, all the doors at once stand open, and the room-floor becomes an open highway.

"What do all the people want?" asked Hansei of his comrade, who had placed himself on the seat beside him.

"Oh, nothing! They just like to be here. They want to see with their own eyes that it is true, and then they can tell it to others. No one, however, grudges you your good fortune."

"My good fortune! It may be so," said Hansei in a tone which had nothing of happiness in it. "See, Wastl, it doesn't go just now quite smooth with me in the world. I had thought the road was a level one, and I have all at once to go over a mountain. You indeed who are single, you can't know what it is."

"It's good that you love your wife so much."

"My wife? So much?"

"I can quite imagine how it is with you."

Hansei shook his head, as if to deny this.

"Be merry," cried Wastl. "Many a one would be glad to have his wife taken away for a year."

"For a year?"

"A longer time would be pleasant to many," thought Wastl. "But your wife is coming back, and she will make a palace of your house, and you will be king number two."

Hansei laughed — he laughed very loud; but he felt in no wise inclined to mirth. On the contrary! it seemed to him as if he must go out into the wood, and hear and see no more of the world. Everything might go to ruin. Why had his wife gone away? Had they for this married and sworn before the altar to bear sorrow and joy together to their lives' end?

But Hansei could not get away — half the village surrounded him, and everyone praised his good fortune, and even the proprietor of the great farm yonder stopped in his carriage at the garden-hedge, alighted,

came up to Hansei, gave him his hand, congratulated him, and said:

"If you like to buy the meadow which is next your garden there, it is rather far away for me, and I will sell it to you."

And the joiner in the village, who had long ago wished to emigrate, said quickly:

"You would do a more prudent thing if you bought at once my whole house and fields; you should have them cheap."

The starlings on the tree did not chatter faster than these men here. Hansei laughed — laughed with all his heart. It was indeed grand! The whole world were coming and offering him house and land, and fields and meadows!

"You were right, Walpurga, you were right!" said he suddenly, half aloud; the men looked at him and at each other, and couldn't make out what was the matter with Hansei.

He got up and stretched himself, as though he were waking from sleep, and said:

"Thank you, my good neighbours; if I can ever repay you in your joy and sorrow, I will certainly do so. But now, I won't change anything; not a nail in the house will I change, till my wife is back again."

"That's spoken like a man — an honest and prudent man," said the proprietor; and greater praise could no one on earth have, than when the proprietor said — "that is honest and prudent."

"Would you like to see my cow?" said Hansei; and he nodded to the landowner, who was just now the only one who suited him.

The landowner thanked him, but he had to go further; he, however, assured Hansei that he would gladly assist him in laying out his money well.

His money! But where had he it? Hansei felt sick at heart, and seized the idea that—he had lost the roll of money! Where was it! He thrust his hand into his pocket — there lay the money all right! And when he now held his roll of money again in his hand, he spoke graciously with those who still remained; with men and women, girls and children — he had a kindly word for each.

At last the people went away, and Hansei knew of nothing better to do than to climb the cherry-tree; that was true, that always remained there — giving, so long as it had aught to give.

He plucked some cherries and ate them; and again he looked at the telegraph wires, and thought — That wire runs into the very palace, and there I could talk to my wife, if I only could! He reached out far beyond the cherry-tree, and touched the wire; but he drew back again quickly, as if frightened — for one may not do that.

"Hansei, where are you?" cried a voice suddenly.

"Here I am."

"Come along," said the voice again. It was the priest who had called him.

Hansei was soon on the ground; and now he received the highest honour — the priest signed to him, and Hansei approached with his hat in his hand.

"I congratulate you," said the priest. "Come along into the inn — the host of the Chamois has broached a fresh tap."

Hansei looked down at himself to see if he had all

at once become another man; the priest had actually invited him to go with him — to drink with him!

He accepted the new honour with dignity, and greeted the people on the road in a very friendly manner, as he walked along by the side of the priest — everyone taking off their hats to him.

In the large room of the host of the Chamois, all spoke to him alone, and about him alone; and he was so full of happiness that he broke open the roll of money in his pocket. He wished to spend the first piece of it in giving it to the priest, that he should read a mass for Walpurga's welfare. But the pieces of money were so large — they were all crown thalers. So Hansei said:

"Priest, will you read a mass for my wife and child, and I will pay for it?"

The twilight came on. The guests began gradually to leave. Hansei, however, still sat there, as if he could not move from the place. At last he was there alone with the host.

"Now they have all been talking you over to something," began the host of the Chamois; "now listen to me. I mean the best of all with you, and am, moreover, not a fool. Do you know, Hansei, what you would suit; you, and your wife still more?"

"What?"

"You must fix here — you and your wife! — I have been landlord long enough. When your wife comes back, bid good night to the shore cottage on the lake, and come and settle here, and lay in good store for child and child's child. We won't now speak any more about it, but don't enter upon anything else. I am your best friend and godfather; I think I have

proved it to-day, and I won't gain a farthing by it — on the contrary."

Oh how good are men when all is going well with us! Hansei sat still longer, looking into his glass. He wished to consider who he really was, and then his thoughts wandered to his wife — where she might now be, and how it was faring with her? If he could only have slept from this hour until the year was over; but to sit there and wait . . . Hansei looked at the clock, it just then struck ten.

"How many times you'll have to strike ten, till we are together again!" he said, looking at the clock.

Like an intoxicated man, Hansei went through the village.

The men sitting before their doors and standing about, greeted him, and wished him happiness, and far into the mountain he well knew everyone was talking of him when they sat on their summer seats. It seemed to him as if he must be divided into a thousand pieces to thank them all.

He stood before his garden and looked at the hedge.

How long was it since he, who had no real home in the world, had been so happy in having a possession of his own; — and now? Within the house sat the grandmother, he heard her singing; she was singing his child to sleep: —

"If all the rivers flowed with wine,
And all the hills were jewels fine,
And they were mine;
My little treasure still would be
Dearer, dearer far to me.

"In conclusion, kiss, I pray,
Because from thee I must away;

Parting is a cruel woe,
Thou remain'st, and I must go;
Time is vast to you and me,
Vaster far Eternity!"

"Time is vast to you and me, vaster far Eternity!" The words fell on Hansei's heart, and the fireflies which floated by, sparkling in the night, resting on the hedge and in the grass, drew his attention here and there, as though he had never seen them before. For a long while Hansei dreamed on thus, and when he at last drew his hand across his dew-damped face, he thought some one would have to carry him into the house and place him in bed. But in turning, the roll of money touched his hip; he is once more awake. He walks far along the road by which Walpurga had gone in the morning; he comes to the heap of stones where she had sat fourteen days before, a little hay is still lying on the stones; he sits down and looks across the broad lake, over which the moon is casting a wide glittering streak of light, all is as still as it was then, but then it was day, now it is night. "Where may my wife be now?" he said aloud, springing up quickly; he will run towards his wife, run the whole night through; how will she rejoice when he comes to her in the palace on the very first morning! He goes forwards with vigorous footsteps. But the thoughts cling to him — how will it be to have to leave her again to-morrow? And what will the people at home say, and what will the grandmother think, left all alone with the child?

Still Hansei kept going on. Suddenly a fear came over him — he had all that money with him. The neighbourhood was indeed secure; it was long since any crime had been heard of, but still robbers might

come, rob him, murder him, and throw him into the lake . . . . Tortured with fear, he turned quickly round and ran homewards.

Presently a threatening figure approached him, and he grasped the knife that hung by his side. If there is only one, and none in concealment, I am man enough, he comforted himself.

The figure approached, it greeted him in the distance — it was a woman's voice. Could it be Walpurga? No, that was not possible.

The figure stood still. Hansei went up to her. "Why, you are Esther! So late out on the road?"

"And you are Hansei!" replied Black Esther, the daughter of Zenza, with a merry laugh. "I thought you were some drunken fellow, because I heard you ever so far off talking with yourself alone. Yes, indeed, now you are alone."

"And you go alone so late at night through the forest?"

"When no one goes with me, I must go alone," laughed Black Esther; and her laugh sounded loud in the silent night. There was a pause. Hansei heard his heart beat — it must have been of course from his quick walking.

"I must go home," said he at last. "I wish you good-night."

Black Esther laid her hand on his shoulder, and said:

"Hansei, it's not my wont to beg, and I never do it by day though I were dying of hunger; but now, you have a good heart, and all is going well with you — give me somewhat, or lend me a bit of money, and I'll give it you back again."

She spoke so trustingly that Hansei trembled; her hand was upon him, he was on the point of feeling in his pocket and giving her the loose crown thaler which he had spared from the priest, but unexpectedly he made a quick movement with his arm, pushed away the hand from his shoulder, and said, "I will give you something another time."

He ran home as fast as he could. Behind him he heard a loud laugh, and it sounded as if a hundred other voices were answering from the rock. Hansei's hair stood on end, he grew icy cold, and then burning hot. This must certainly have been one of the bogies; she had only taken the appearance of Black Esther, and it must be all true about the bogies whom the old carpenter had seen, and had confessed it even on his death-bed; they run about by full moon, and wrap themselves round in their long hair, which one fancies is clothing; and in such a night, when the mother is away from her child, they have power . . . Hansei had never in his life gone so far on the road by the lake, and he had never in his life run as he was doing to-day.

At last he reached his house; it still stood there, all was still sure. Hansei held his hand long against the wall, as if he wanted to assure himself that it was still there.

He went into the house. A light was still burning in the room; the grandmother was sitting on a footstool, holding the little angel on her lap; she covered with one hand her red teary eyes, with the other she signed to Hansei to come in softly.

Hansei didn't look at his mother-in-law, nor see what she had gone through, and was still going through.

He was only occupied with himself, and sat behind the table, weary and strange, as if he had come from a far and dangerous journey. He had again and again to remember that he was at home, and yet it was no longer a true at-home. The grandmother laid the child in the cradle and sat there, her chin supported on her clenched hand. Under the protection of the four walls, she had passed a very different time to Hansei outside them. After Walpurga's departure, and after Hansei had also gone away, Stasi had remained with her for a time. How it would fare with Walpurga was soon discussed, for they knew nothing about it. When night came on, the girl said she would go home, but would come again on the morrow. The grandmother assented; she was gladly alone, she could then better think of her child. She breathed out a prayer for her on the way; but the words came forth so easily that she could think of something else at the same time. At first she thought Walpurga was praying too the very same words; at every word they were further and further from each other, but in spirit they were still together. She rejoiced that Walpurga had turned out so well in everything; she was to be relied on. It was hard for her so alone in the strange world; but at any rate they were also human beings. A fear would come over her whether Walpurga would hold firm. She had indeed many honest thoughts, but if they would only always occur to her at the right time. "You would ne'er afflict me by letting yourself be ruined," she said aloud to herself, and left off praying. Suddenly she felt so solitary and forsaken, so alone; she had never yet passed a night without Walpurga, and she looked at the stars and wished that it were but

day. Hansei might as well have remained at home; but still it was an honour for the priest to take him with him to the inn, as Stasi had informed her. He will now certainly send home the grandmother a pint of old wine to strengthen her heart; and if it were only half a pint, one would still see the good will. Her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth; she panted for the wine, and listened to hear if the servant of the Chamois were not coming with the bottle under her apron — she waited long and in vain. Then a nameless sympathy with herself overcame her, and she wept great heavy tears. Oh, if her husband were but still alive! A poor widow like her has always to be at the call of others, but how it fares with her no one thinks. She wept, but she grew relieved from the weeping, and exclaimed — You are a wicked sinner; isn't it well with you when you have food, and dwelling, and clothing, and not a bad word? Be thankful that you are still able, and can do something for others.

The tears had lightened her; they had sprung from a wrong motive, but they had come freely forth. As if in shame of her little grandchild, who could see nothing, she turned away from it, dried her furrowed face, and sang merry songs to the child. Then she waited again for a long time quiet till Hansei came. And so he found her — her chin resting on her clenched hand, sitting by the cradle.

"Where have you been so long?" asked the grandmother softly.

"I scarcely know myself."

"Walpurga is now, I suppose, already in bed."

"It may well be, they drove so quickly with four horses."

"Do you hear how the cow is lowing in the outhouse yonder? The poor beast isn't accustomed to stand alone, and the butcher drove the calf past this evening. It is horrible how she frets. Go a bit into the outhouse and look to her."

Hansei went into the outhouse; the cow was quiet. He went away, and she began to low again. He turned back, and spoke kindly to her; as long as he spoke and laid his hand on the back of the cow, she was quiet; but as soon as he went away, she began to moan all the more pitifully. So he went despairingly up and down between the room and the outhouse. Then he went back again to the cow, gave her the best fodder, and sat down on a bundle of hay. At last the cow laid down to sleep, and Hansei also slept. He was excessively tired. There are few men who have gone through so much in one day as our Hansei.

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

When Walpurga woke next morning in the palace, she fancied she was at home, and looked on the strange things around her as a dream which will not vanish. It was only by degrees that she remembered what had passed. She closed her eyes again and uttered her morning prayer, then she looked up freely; the same sun shone which was lighting up the shore cottage by the lake at home.

She got up with a fresh self-animated spirit.

Long she sat by the window, staring out into the strange life.

She saw nothing of the city-doings. The palace-

square, encircled by a large row of bushy orange-trees, was far removed from the noise of the streets; only the two soldiers at the palace-gate were to be seen marching up and down with their muskets on their arms.

Walpurga's thoughts, however, wandered homewards. She saw as if in reality, how all was going on at home in the cottage on the lake. She heard the wood crackling with which her mother was kindling the fire; she knows the little lamp, which she takes from the kitchen-shelf. We have milk in the house, she thinks, for we have now got a cow. Mother will be so glad to be able to milk again; and when they are now lighting the fire at home, they will be thinking of me; and the starlings on the cherry-tree will be chattering — our housewife is away, but a cow is there instead!

Walpurga laughed to herself, and again her thoughts wandered on: — My Hansei will be lazy this morning; he always requires being woke, else he sleeps till it rings for mid-day; he never wakes of himself. "The sun is burning a hole in your bed! Hansei, get up!" cries mother, and then he gets up and washes himself at the spring; and now they are eating their soup together, and the child has its good milk. If I had but looked well at the cow! Hansei is now fetching fodder from the host of the Chamois. If only he does not let himself be cheated by him, for he is an arrant rogue. And Hansei will seem to himself so forsaken, more forsaken than my child. But, thank God, he has enough to do. It is good time for fishing, and he won't go into the wood. Now he is jumping into the boat with a noise; the oars are splashing in the lake, and he is rowing out and is fishing! . . .

Walpurga goes on thinking how it will be at noon, and then in the evening; suddenly her head feels as if her reason was standing still — to be away and to be dead seems almost as the same thing; we cannot here think how it will be an hour after we are dead; we cannot imagine ourselves out of the world. Her head is whirling round, she turns quickly and says to Mademoiselle Kramer, as if in fear of an apparition:

"Let us talk of something."

Mademoiselle Kramer did not allow this to be twice said. She told Walpurga how the whole palace were talking of it, that the queen had kissed her last evening, and that it would be in all the journals to-morrow.

"Pooh!" replied Walpurga.

Mademoiselle Kramer explained to her that she might indeed use such a word of herself, but not of others; that one ought always to explain modestly what one meant, and not merely give out a sound like a bird.

Walpurga looked up and stood listening while Mademoiselle Kramer continued speaking, and then at last she said:

"That's almost exactly the same as my poor father once said to me; I didn't understand it though then. Now I only wanted to say — The people in the town must find time hang heavy when they make a fuss about such a thing." To herself she again concluded with "Pooh!"

The little prince awoke; Walpurga took him up, and when he again went to sleep on her breast, she sang to him in a clear voice:

We two are so united
So happily allied
That joyous are the moments
When we are side by side.

When she had finished, and had laid the child in the cradle again, she looked round; the king and the physician were standing at the door.

"You can sing then magnificently!" said the king.

"Pooh!" replied Walpurga; "it's enough for home, but it's not especially beautiful," she added, looking at Mademoiselle Kramer. She was interpreting herself now.

The king and the physician were delighted at the appearance of the child.

"Life is quite another thing when one looks into the eye of one's child for the first time," said the king; and Walpurga replied:

"Yes, the world looks quite different then to one; the king has said a true word."

No one answered, and the king smiled. He went away with the physician. Mademoiselle Kramer carefully and forcibly impressed her first injunction on Walpurga:

"You must not speak to his Majesty the king, or to her Majesty the queen, until they ask you something."

"That is sensible! Then they hear nothing amiss! Oh how wisely arranged!" cried Walpurga to the surprise of Mademoiselle Kramer. "I will pay attention to that."

At breakfast in the palace pavilion, it was manifest that Mademoiselle Kramer, and perhaps Walpurga also, had spoken the truth. In the groups which gathered in the verandah under the orange-trees, confidential friends talked together, and after having mutually extolled each other, and convinced themselves that they might give free vent to their backbitings, they spoke of how the

queen's sentimentality had shown itself again in her behaviour towards the nurse; that such sickly doings were unfortunately an heirloom in the family; and that the lady of the chamber, it was said, had again fallen ill from her vexation at the violation of etiquette in the conduct of the queen.

"The queen takes from the value of her favours," said an older lady of the court, who had a good pound and a half of false hair on her head.

"Nothing is more wearisome than everlasting tenderness," remarked another corpulent and strictly religious court lady; but, covering the wicked insinuation at once with the mantle of love, she added, "The queen is still half a child, and at bottom she means it all so well."

The religious court lady was thus screened on both sides — she went both with the slanderous and the loving.

"You have slept but little?" said an elderly lady to a younger, pale-looking one.

"Yes, indeed," sighed the one accosted. "By a single light I have read through the last volume of" — she mentioned a new French novel, an unequivocal one — "it is very interesting; I will return the book to you to day."

"Then may I be allowed to have it? — and I? — and I?" was heard on various sides.

The religious court lady would listen to none of these things, though she had already herself read the novel in secret. She led the conversation again to Walpurga; and had the latest information that the nurse could sing very beautifully.

"Who sings beautifully?" asked Countess Irma approaching.

"That is something for you, dear Wildenort; you can learn many new songs from Walpurga, which you can sing to the zitter."

"I will wait till we are back in the country. Such a peasant in palace apartments is an anomaly. When does the court return to Sommerburg?"

"Not before six weeks."

There was still a good deal of talk about Walpurga, and one lady maintained that it was an intrigue of the physician in ordinary to fetch a wet-nurse from the mountains, whence the physician himself also came; he was always procuring allies for himself — for this person would have great influence over the queen. Then they talked of the intriguing nature of the physician, who assumed the appearance of sympathizing seriously with the extravagant fancies of the queen; for of this all might be certain, whoever maintained himself in the favour of the court so long and so steadily, effected it by no honourable means.

"The physician is not so very old either," said a very thin court lady; "he is just at the beginning of the fifties. I think he has dyed his hair white, that he may look right venerable before his time."

This joke caused immense laughter.

Before breakfast there were invariably separate groups of men and women. In the circle of the court gentlemen, the talk was of the telegrams which had been sent to all the courts, many answers to which had already arrived and were still coming in.

It was not till after breakfast, in a conclave of the royal household, that it was decided who besides her

parents would be asked by the queen to be a sponsor. It was even said that the pope would send an especial nuncio to the christening, to officiate with the bishop.

From such mighty topics the king's aide-de-camp, the brother of Countess Irma, brought back the conversation again to Walpurga; he extolled her beauty and her facetious ways, and the queen's kiss was also here talked over; the aide-de-camp had given vent to a sally of wit on the matter, over which they were all laughing loudly.

Suddenly "the king!" was heard.

The groups separated and arranged themselves in two rows. The king, acknowledging their salutation, passed through the rows to the hall of Diana, where they breakfasted. On the ceiling, the goddess Diana with a female hunting-train had been painted by a pupil of Rubens. The lord steward handed the king a packet of telegrams. The king replied that he had better open them himself, and inform him especially when they contained anything more than congratulations.

They now sat down to breakfast.

Here in the capital it was not so merry and unconstrained as out in the summer palace; the want of rest, moreover, of the preceding night was still evident in all.

"Countess Irma," said the king, "I commend Walpurga to you; she is just a person for you, and you can learn beautiful songs of her, and teach her new ones."

"Thank you, Sire; will your Majesty only be so good as to order that the mistress of the chamber shall allow me to go at any time into the apartments of his royal Highness the crownprince?"

"Will you see to that, my good Rittersfeld?" replied the king, turning to the lord steward.

Many congratulations were showered on Countess Irma, who sat at the lower end of the table; the conversation now almost exclusively related to Walpurga.

The morning papers were brought to the king. He looked them through, and exclaimed involuntarily:

"This babbling press! There stands the queen's kiss already in the newspapers of the country." His face darkened; it was evident that the fact, and still more the publication of it, was highly painful to him. After a time he said:

"My gentlemen and ladies, I beg you to take care that the queen hears nothing of this."

He rose quickly and went away.

The breakfast party separated but slowly, and the religious court lady could now openly profess herself a slanderer. The mantle of love was no longer necessary — the king was already weary of his sentimental consort. . . .

Was the Countess Irma . . . . Who knows whether it were not a subtly arranged plan to procure her open access to the apartments of the crown prince? The king can meet her there. . . . . Who knows —

Great ingenuity was shown in combinations and suppositions, which nevertheless were whispered about with great care and circumspection. Walpurga and the queen, and even the crown prince, were for a time quite forgotten.

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

"THERE, my boy! Now thou'st seen the sun for the first time, and thou'rt to see this sun in health and happiness for seventy-seven years; and when the seventy-seven years are over, Almighty God will set thee free again. Yesterday evening, out of love for thee, a thousand million of lights were kindled, but all that is nothing compared with the sun, which God Almighty has to-day kindled for thee in the sky. There, my boy! be a good boy, that thou may be worthy of having the sun to shine on thee. Yes, now an angel is laughing in thee! only laugh in thy sleep! Thou hast an angel on earth, and that's thy mother, and thou'rt mine too — yes, thou'rt mine!"

So spoke Walpurga in a gentle voice, but in the heartiest tone, looking into the face of the child that was sleeping on her lap. In her soul there began already that mysterious and loving connection which is produced by the tender office of a foster-mother. It is a deep trait in human nature, that we love those to whom we can show benefits; their life becomes one with our own.

Walpurga forgot herself, forgot everything which belonged to her away in the mountains, in the shore hut by the lake; she was now necessary here — a life was here depending on her.

With beaming eyes she looked up to Mademoiselle Kramer, who gazed upon her with a face full of pleasure.

"I think," said she, "the palace is just like a

church; one has here nothing but good and pious thoughts; all men are so gentle and hearty, and have no concealment."

Mademoiselle Kramer laughed, and replied:

"Dear child —"

"Don't call me 'child!' I am no child. I am a mother."

"But in the great world here, you are still but a child. A court is something quite peculiar. Some are hunting, others fishing; some are building, others are painting; some are learning dramatic parts, others are practising pieces of music; a dancer is learning a new dance, a scholar is writing a new book; everyone throughout the land is cooking and roasting, practising and making music, writing, and painting, and drawing — everyone is doing everything, that the king and the queen may have pleasure in it; it is prepared for them!"

"I understand that!" interrupted Walpurga; and Mademoiselle Kramer continued:

"I think I have sixteen ancestors in the palace," — there were really only six, but sixteen sounded better, and therefore Mademoiselle Kramer allowed herself this addition — "for many generations my ancestors have been court servants. My father is house-steward at the summer palace; I was born there; I know the court; I know everything; I can teach you a great deal."

"And I shall like to learn," said Walpurga.

"You think all men mean well? Believe me, in a palace there are people of all sorts, good and bad; all crimes and all virtues are current there — things of which you have no idea, and ought never to have;

but all is done politely. I beg you, remain just as you are, and go home again as you came."

Walpurga stared at Mademoiselle Kramer. Who then could make her otherwise?

The message came that the queen was awake, and that Walpurga was to go to her with the prince.

She went — the child in her arms — through the apartments, accompanied by the physician, Mademoiselle Kramer, and two waiting-women. The queen lay quiet and beautiful on the pillow; she only turned her face in recognition as they entered.

A broad slanting ray of sunlight fell through the half-drawn curtain into the room; it was to-day much more beautiful, much more quiet in the chamber, as if there were a stillness which is more than silence.

"Good morning!" said the queen in a cordial voice; "give me my child!" She gave a glance to the babe on her arm, then she raised her eyes, and without looking at any one she breathed out softly:

"I see my child for the first time in broad daylight!"

For a time all was quiet, as if no human life were breathing, and as if the broad sunshine alone were penetrating into the room.

"Have you slept well?" inquired the queen. Walpurga was glad that the queen had asked her, for now she could answer. Her eye quickly wandered to Mademoiselle Kramer.

"Yes, indeed," said Walpurga. "Sleep is the first and the last and the best thing we get in this world."

"She is sensible," said the queen in French, turning to the physician.

Walpurga's heart shrunk with fear. As soon as

she heard French, she seemed to herself sold and betrayed; those around her were to her as if veiled in an invisible cap, like the hobgoblins in the fable; they were unseen and yet spoke.

"Has the prince slept well?" inquired the queen.

Walpurga passed her hand over her face, as if she were shaking off a web which was creeping over her. The queen doesn't call her child "child" or "son," but "prince."

Walpurga answered:

"Yes, thank God, quite well; at least I heard nothing of him, and I only wish to say, I should like to do with him" — she could not say "prince," and always spoke of him with the pronoun — "I should like to do with him as I have done with my own child. From the first day we have brought her up well. My mother taught me how. A child like this has its own will from the very first minute, and one must never yield to it. One must not take it out of the cradle if it wishes, nor give it anything to drink if it wishes; everything has its right time, it soon gets accustomed to it, and it won't harm it at all to cry a little; on the contrary, it opens the chest."

"Does he cry?" asked the queen.

The child itself gave the answer, by beginning to cry loudly.

"Take him and quiet him," begged the queen.

The king just then entered, while the boy was still crying lustily.

"He will have a good voice of command," said he, stretching out his hand to his wife and kissing hers.

Walpurga quieted the child; she was again dismissed to her room with Mademoiselle Kramer.

The king told her of the despatches which had arrived, and of the decision of the sponsors. The queen was agreeable to all.

When Walpurga had again returned to her room, and laid the child in the cradle, she walked uneasily up and down.

"There is no angel on earth! They are all just like us, and who knows . . ." she went on saying. She was angry with the queen; why should she not listen quietly when her child cries? One must accept it all with children, both joy and sorrow.

She went out into the corridor, and heard the organ in the palace chapel. For the first time in her life the sound offended her. It doesn't belong to the house, thought she; not just here, where all sorts of things are going on—the church ought to stand by itself.

When she came back into the room, a stranger was there. Mademoiselle Kramer told her that this was the queen's tailor.

Walpurga laughed aloud at the word "tailor." The elegant man looked confused at her, and Mademoiselle Kramer explained that this was the dressmaker of her Majesty the queen; that he had come to make Walpurga three new dresses.

"Am I to dress as they do in the town?"

"Oh dear no! You are to have most accurately the costume of your home, and you can order for yourself a red, blue, and green stomacher. Or will you like any other colour?"

"I don't know; but I should like also a work-day dress. Always to go about so in Sunday clothes every day — that won't do at all!"

"We are always in Sunday clothes at the court,

and when her Majesty the queen drives out again, you must drive out with her."

"Really? Then it may be right!"

Walpurga laughed all the time that her measure was being taken, so that the tailor had to request her to keep more quiet. While he was putting the measure into his pocket, he explained to Mademoiselle Kramer that he had ordered an exact model, and that the master of the ceremonies had let him have some drawings, so that the costume would be very perfect.

At last he begged to be allowed to see the crown prince.

Mademoiselle Kramer would have permitted it, but Walpurga, on the contrary, refused. Before the child was christened, no one ought to see it out of curiosity; and a tailor indeed! The child would be no true man all its life.

Mademoiselle Kramer gave an intelligible sign to the court tailor, that one could not venture to oppose the superstitions of the people, and that the nurse was not to be excited; and the tailor took his leave.

After this occurrence Walpurga had her first violent dispute with Mademoiselle Kramer. She did not understand how she could let the child be looked at.

"Nothing does a child more harm than to be looked at in its sleep, and by a tailor too!"

All the nonsensical fancies which are circulated in the popular songs against tailors, broke forth in Walpurga; and she sang one of those bitter satirical songs:

"Hurra, merry heart, intrepid and strong,
A snail was hunting a tailor along;
And had not the tailor sprung bravely away,
The tailor were caught by the snail that day.'

* * * *

By her acquaintance with the court tailor, Mademoiselle Kramer had sunk considerably in Walpurga's estimation. The former endeavoured to quiet her excited raillery, and said:

"Are you then not at all pleased with your new and beautiful clothes?"

"Honestly confessed, No! I don't put them on for myself, I put them on for others, who hang upon me what pleases themselves. I care but little! I have once for all given myself up, and I must take pleasure in it."

"May I be allowed to enter?" asked a sweet voice.

Countess Irma entered. She held out her hand to Walpurga, and said:

"Welcome, my countrywoman! I come also from the mountains, seven leagues distant from your home. I know it. I once crossed the lake with your father. Does he still live?"

"No, alas, no longer; he was drowned, and the lake has never yet given back its dead."

"He was a fine old man. You are like him; there's a strong family resemblance."

"I am so glad that there is any one here who has known my father. The tailor — I meant to say the physician — knew him also. Yes, at home or abroad, there was never a more honest man than my father, and that every one must say."

"Yes, indeed; I have heard it too."

"May I ask the lady's name?"

"Countess Wildenort."

"Wildenort? I too have heard that name before. Yes, now I think, my mother has named it to me. Yes,

your father was reckoned a very charitable man. Is he also long dead?"

"No, he still lives."

"Is he here too?"

"No."

"And as what are you here then, Countess?"

"As lady in waiting."

"What is that?"

"Being attached to the queen's person; it is what is called among you a 'companion.'"

"Is it? And then has your father given you away?"

So much questioning was far from agreeable to the Countess Irma. She therefore said:

"Walpurga, I wanted to ask you — can you write well?"

"I once could, but I have quite forgotten it again."

"Then I have just hit it off, in having come for that reason. So, when you wish to write to your husband, and mother, and child, dictate it to me, and I will write everything just as you tell me."

"I could have done that too," suggested Mademoiselle Kramer timidly; "and your ladyship need not trouble yourself."

"No, let the Countess write for me. Will you do so at once?"

"Yes, certainly."

But Walpurga had to go to the child.

While she was in the adjoining room, Countess Irma conversed with Mademoiselle Kramer.

Walpurga returned; Irma sat down pen in hand before the writing-paper, and Walpurga began to dictate:

"Dear husband, dear mother, and dear child. No, stop! don't write so! Take a fresh sheet. There, now I have it! now write!"

"I wish to let you know that by God's help I arrived here safe and sound in the coach with the four horses. I don't know how. And the queen is an angel, and there are millions of lights, and my child . . ."

Suddenly Walpurga covered her face with both her hands — she knew not whom she meant, when she said "my child."

"And my child?" — repeated Countess Irma, after a longer pause.

"No," cried Walpurga, "I cannot write to-day. Forgive me, but it won't do. But I have your promise that you will write for me to-morrow or the day after. Do come to see us every day."

"And shall I bring a kind friend with me?"

"Whoever is a friend of yours can of course come. Isn't it so, Mademoiselle Kramer?"

"Yes, certainly; Countess Irma has special permission."

"I will bring a very good friend with me who can sing beautifully; she has a voice so soft and gentle — but I won't torment you any longer with riddles; I can play the zitter, and I will bring my zitter with me."

"You can play the zitter?" exclaimed Walpurga, showing her teeth with delight.

Her further exclamation was interrupted, for the king entered.

With a slight inclination of the head, he greeted Countess Irma. She had risen, and she again bowed to him as though she were going to sit down on the floor.

"What are you writing there?" asked the king.

"They are secrets of Walpurga's, your Majesty," replied Countess Irma.

"The king may read all that's there," said Walpurga, as she handed him the sheet.

He looked through it, folded it together, and put it in his breast pocket, with a glance at the Countess.

"I am going to sing with Walpurga," said Irma, "your Majesty can here again see that music is the noblest thing in the world. Walpurga and I are equal when we sing. All that other arts produce, poetry especially, may be translated by every one into his own tongue, according to his knowledge and opinions."

"Certainly," replied the king; "music alone is the language of the world, and needs no translation, for in it soul speaks to soul."

Walpurga opened wide both mouth and ears, as the two thus talked together.

Then the king, accompanied by Countess Irma, went to look at the baby for a short time; and saying — "Next Sunday is the christening," he took his leave.

Walpurga looked after the king with a strange expression; then she turned and gazed earnestly at Countess Irma.

The latter began meddling at once with the papers, and then took her leave in a cheerful voice — so cheerful indeed, that it seemed almost constrained; there was no reason to laugh, and yet she laughed.

Walpurga looked long at the curtains behind which the Countess had disappeared; then she said to Mademoiselle Kramer:

"You said a true word — the palace is no church." She did not attempt to explain herself more closely.

"I will teach you writing," said Mademoiselle Kramer; "then we shall have good occupation, and you can write alone to your own people."

"Yes: I will do so," concluded Walpurga.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

"I WANT to ask you a favour," said Walpurga one day to the Countess Irma. "Tell me always straight out when I do anything wrong."

"Very gladly; but then you must always tell me also, if I" —

"Then I have something on my heart at once."

"Well, say it out freely."

"When we happen to be alone."

"My good Kramer, will you be so kind as to leave us alone?"

Mademoiselle Kramer went into the adjoining room, and Walpurga saw with astonishment that here people were pushed about here and there like chairs.

"Well, what is the matter?" inquired the Countess.

"Look here; if I say something simple, thou'lt not take it amiss — thou'lt be sure not to do that?"

Whenever Walpurga grew eager, she always said "thou."

"What is it?" asked Irma again.

"Look here; thou'rt so beautiful, so very beautiful, more so than any one I have ever seen before; thou'rt still more beautiful than the queen — no, not more beautiful, but stronger, and goodness looks out of thine eyes" —

"Well, what is it? Say it out" —

"I had rather think I was wrong, but it is better, I am quite sure. Now — I didn't like how the king looked at thee yesterday, and thou at him, and he put his hand on thine on the railings of the cradle; and he is a married man and a father. Thou'rt an unmarried girl, so one don't know what it is when a man looks at one so; but I am a married woman, and can warn thee, and I dare, and I must. Thou'st said, 'We'll be good friends,' and now comes the trial of it at once."

Irma shook her head, and replied:

"You are good; but you are mistaken. The king has a very noble heart, and especially since his son was born he has delighted in making all people as happy as he is himself. He loves his wife enthusiastically, and you have also at once seen that she is an angel." —

"And if she were no angel, she is his wife, and the mother of his child, and he must be true to her; and with every look which he casts upon another, he is a false and forsworn man, whose eyes ought to be put out. Look here; if I could think that my husband could do that — men are very bad, they could all of them do so — that a man could stand there by the cradle of his new-born babe, and with the same eyes with which he has looked at his child, could look upon another woman, telling her with those eyes — 'I love you!' look here, if I could think that, I could go crazed; and if a man, who has pressed the hand of another, can go away and give his hand to his wife, and with the same hand touch the face of his child — the world in which that could happen ought to be

burnt up, and God Almighty ought to rain pitch and brimstone upon it."

"Speak softly, Walpurga; don't scream out so wildly! Don't let such words cross your lips! You are not come here to be a judge of morality, and you have nothing at all to judge! What do you understand of the world? You have certainly no idea of what politeness is."

Countess Irma had sharply interrupted Walpurga with these words; she had humbled her deeply, and she concluded:

"Well, now you know what you are about, and who you are. And now I will just say one thing more; I forgive you for having insulted both the king and me with your silly talk. If I hadn't pity for your want of judgment, I would never speak another word with you; but I am good to you, and I know that you also mean well, so I will stand by you, and will tell you something:—Let things go on around you as they will, and don't trouble yourself about them. Take care of your child, and don't let any one induce you to utter a word of evil-speaking. Believe me, no one here means honourably with another; they are all always slandering each other, and at last one has not a soul in the palace who is a good friend. Just observe this. And one thing more I have to say:— I thank you for what you have said to me. You have meant well, and it is right that you should hold nothing back. So I will always be a good friend to you, and you will have a support in me. Although one is respectful to the king, he is as honest as your Hansei; and I am as honest as you. So now give me your hand, and it's over! Above all, however, don't let the

lady housekeeper divine a word of all this which we have been talking together. Remember, walls have ears, and everything is heard here."

Without another word, Countess Irma began the air of a highland song upon her zitter.

Walpurga scarcely knew what had happened to her. She was angry with herself, at her stupidity and boldness. But she made one resolve — she would henceforth think everything to herself.

While Irma was playing, the king again passed through the portière, and listened silently. Irma did not look up, her eyes were fixed upon her zitter. When she had finished, the king uttered a gentle bravo. She rose, bowed low, but she did not this time accompany the king into the room when he went to look at the prince.

"Your zitter is in good tune, but you, beautiful Countess, seem out of tune," said the king, again entering the room.

"I am also in good tune, your Majesty," replied Countess Irma; "I have only been playing an air just now to Walpurga which has deeply agitated me."

The king quickly left, this time without giving the countess his hand.

Walpurga felt saddest of all to think that she might no longer trust in Mademoiselle Kramer.

"Oh my poor child!" said she one day to the prince on her lap, when no one heard her — "oh my poor child! thou'lt have to grow up among men where no one wholly trusts another. If I could only take thee with me, thou'dst be a splendid boy! Now thou'rt still innocent — children alone, until they learn to speak, are innocent in this world. What does it mat-

ter? I have not made the world, and I need not change it! The countess is right. I will nurse you and feed you well, God may do the rest."

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

"At last your wish is fulfilled," said Countess Irma to the physician, as they were rising from the dinner-table.

"What wish?"

"I have a female friend, a companion; and, as it says in the song, 'Thou'lt no' find a better.'"

"Your friendliness to the peasant woman is full of kindness, and deserves acknowledgment; but that is not having a friend. You must have one of your own sex on a level with yourself. You are always in the position of patroness to this peasant woman; she can never find fault with you, or at least she cannot sustain a reproof. Plain sense — I might say, nature — has not weapons enough against the armoury of cultivation."

Irma shrunk at these words.

The physician, however, quietly continued:

"You stand as regards the simplicity of the people, like a grown-up person in relation to a child. I fear, you have neglected to obtain a friend of equal birth."

"Equal birth? — Then you too are an aristocrat."

The physician explained to Irma that the perfectly equal rights of man can be recognised without doing away with social distinctions.

"When I go home," said Irma — and a light spread over her features — "when I have lived in your

thoughts, all that I do and wish to do appears to me so small and pitiful; it is with me almost as after some good music, when I always would like to do something unusual. I wish I had talent for art."

"Rather rejoice in being yourself a beautiful work of nature, and help yourself to further growth; that's the best thing."

The physician was called away.

Irma sat long on one of the seats, then she went to her room; she played with her parrot, she looked at her flowers; at last she began to paint flowers on a marble slab — it was to be a rich work. For whom? She knew not. A tear fell into the middle of a rose, the colours of which were still wet; she looked up and left the work, then she dried her tears — she must paint the whole rose afresh.

The day before the christening, Walpurga dictated her first letter to Countess Irma:

"To-morrow is Sunday, and then I am always with you. I am so always in thought. It seems as though it were seven years already that I have been away from home. The day is so long here, and there are more people in the palace than three times the number in our church. There are many servants in the house here who are married, and have also servants of their own; there are none but tall fine men in service in the palace here. Mademoiselle Kramer tells me that royalty only likes to see fine men about it; and many look quite venerable, and speak as properly as a clergyman — they call them here lacqueys, and when the king goes up to one, the man stoops down as if bent together.

This is an art, to make oneself small in this way, folded up like a pocket-knife. Oh, and I have so many good things! If I could only send you some of them. I am only so glad that in four weeks we are going to the country-palace, and we are to remain there till autumn. But how is it with my child, and with thee, Hansei, and thee, mother, and thee too, Stasi? In the night, when I am sleeping, I am always at home. I can't however sleep much, my prince is a thorough little watchman, and the doctor has said I mustn't let him cry as much as we do at home. But he has good lungs, and to-morrow is the christening. The queen's brother and his wife are to be sponsors, and a great many princes and princesses besides. I have got too some fine new clothes, and two green hats with gold lace, and two silver chains for my stomacher, and all that I am to take with me when I go home. It is a long while though before that. If every week is as long as the last, I shall be seven hundred years old, when I come home. I am quite merry again. At first it always seemed as if I were hearing the cow lowing in our outhouse.

"She who is writing this, is the Countess Wildenort, from out yonder over the Gamsbühel; she is a very good friend to me. She knew poor father too, and thou, mother, know'st something of her family.

"And Hansei, I have got something to say to thee. Don't be too much with the host of the Chamois; he is a rogue, and he will talk the money out of thy pocket. There are good and bad men everywhere, at home and here. And the doctor says, you ought to give our cow no green food, nothing but hay, or the milk won't agree with the child.

"I am learning now to write myself. I learn altogether a good deal here.

"And tell me too what the people say about my having gone away so quickly, and having made up my mind to do so.

"I don't care though what people say. I know that I do rightly for my child, and for my husband, and for my mother.

"And dear mother, take a girl into the house, we can pay her now.

"And Hansei, don't let the innkeeper talk thy money out of thy pocket. Put it by safely, till we can buy a field or two.

"And don't forget, Wednesday is the day of father's death, and have a mass said for him.

"We have the church here in the house, and I hear the organ every morning in the passage. Tomorrow is a great day, and I remain your faithful

"WALPURGA ANDERMATTEN.

"I here send a little hood for my child, let it wea- it every Sunday. I send my love to you all a thousand times, and remain, your

"WALPURGA."

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

"OH how beautiful! how very beautiful! Is all that mine? Am I the same? Is it thou, Walpurga of the shore cottage on the lake? What is she fancying herself!"

With similar and still more arrogant expressions,

Walpurga stood before the full-length mirror, and was so delighted, that Mademoiselle Kramer had to hold her to prevent her from springing into the mirror and embracing the figure she saw in it.

The new clothes from the court tailor had come. It was hard to say which was the most beautiful — the stomacher, the petticoat, the shirt with its short wide sleeves; but no! the green narrow turned-up hat with flowers and gold lace, and the two gold tassels — that is still the most beautiful; it sits as if moulded there, and one would imagine one had nothing on one's head, so light is it! There, still a little more to the left, so, — well, you are beautiful! People are right! She placed her hands at her sides, and turned round and round, and danced about like one possessed; and then stood again before the mirror, and stared in it, silently, as if lost.

Yes, that mirror! Walpurga had never in all her life seen her full figure from head to foot. What does one see in such a trumpery glass as the one at home? Scarcely the face and a little bit of the neck!

She clasped her neck, which was now encircled by a garnet necklace of seven rows with a clasp in front. And how clever Mademoiselle Kramer is! What arts she knows of!

The latter had placed behind her a large looking-glass on castors, and now Walpurga can see how she looks from behind, and all round! Oh what arts people know of!

What do we out yonder know of the world? Nothing, nothing at all; and of oneself nothing either!

"So Walpurga looks thus? So she appears when people look at her! So on this side, and so on that.

I must say, you please me; you are not at all amiss. So that is Hansei's wife! He may well be contented, and he is honest and good, and has deserved her faithfully."

So talked Walpurga to herself; a strange intoxication seized her. For the first time in her life she had seen herself at full length.

The first stranger who saw her thus was the lacquey, Baum.

Baum always wore shoes without high heels, and put down his whole foot at once, so that his step was never heard; he always came so modestly as if he did not wish to disturb, but he never betrayed anything, and was available for everything.

"Hi, how beautiful!" he exclaimed, and stood quite still with admiration.

"He has no right to find me beautiful! He is a married man, and I am a married woman!" said Walpurga; her own voice appeared strange to her.

"The Lord steward commands," said Baum in a military tone, as if he had made no former remark, and had heard nothing — "that the nurse shall come directly into the palace chapel, if his royal Highness the crownprince is asleep; a rehearsal is to take place."

"I have already tried on my clothes here," replied Walpurga.

The lacquey explained that it had nothing to do with trying on clothes; but that all who were to take part, with the exception of the highest personages, were to rehearse before the order of the procession at the great ceremony, so that on the next day everything might go on without disturbance.

Walpurga went with Baum.

The lords and ladies of the court were all assembled in the great throne-room, and there was a confused hubbub of voices which resounded strangely from the high-vaulted ceiling. When Walpurga entered, she caught many a whisper. Many said in French — many even in plain German — that the nurse was a splendid sample of a highland peasant. Walpurga smiled on all sides, utterly unembarrassed.

The Lord steward, bearing in his hand a gold-headed stick, now placed himself on the lowest step of the throne, which was covered with an ermine mantle. He struck the floor three times with the stick, and then held it up. Those present had already a printed paper in their hands; Walpurga also received one of them. The Lord steward read it once more aloud, enjoining the most exact adherence to the programme. The procession now passed through the picture-gallery and the portrait-hall into the chapel. The entrance to it was like some enchanted garden full of large foreign trees and strongly fragrant flowers; the chapel too was ornamented with trees and flowers, and on the ceiling above angels were flying in the air.

The mistress of the chamber, who looked to-day even more severe than on that first evening, was engaged to the utmost in performing her official duties; this was not the time for being ill.

She earnestly enjoined upon Walpurga, who passed by her, to carry the prince very carefully, and when she placed him at the altar in the arms of the sponsor, not to withdraw her arms until she was quite certain that the godfather held the prince securely.

"That's a matter of course; I am not so dull as all that!" said Walpurga.

"I require no answer." The mistress of the chamber was angry with Walpurga; she wished in reality to be angry with the queen, because she so spoiled the poor girl, but she could better make Walpurga suffer for what was wrong than she could the higher personages.

All the different groups were chattering together, as if they were in a ball-room; indeed even a clear laugh was often heard.

The lord steward placed himself at the altar, mustered the assembly, and asked if all were in their right places.

"Yes" was answered here and there amid much laughter.

Walpurga now for the first time looked in broad daylight at the image of the Madonna, which she had seen on the evening of her arrival by the glow of the ever-burning lamp; and she said half aloud, looking up at the Madonna; "Thou must also look on at the rehearsal." Now she understood what Mademoiselle Kramer had said, that everything was cooked and prepared and rightly arranged beforehand for royalty. But was it to be so also with a sacred matter? It must be, or they would not do it. And the court chaplain was there also, not in his priestly robes certainly; he was speaking with the lord steward as if he were in the street, and was taking a pinch out of his gold snuffbox.

This therefore is the rehearsal, thought Walpurga to herself, as the mistress of the chamber told her she might go, as she now knew where she would have to place herself. She ordered her to wear on the morrow

white cotton gloves; she would have some pairs sent to her.

Walpurga went back through the throne-room, and then through the picture-gallery; she did not look round, she went on through several apartments, and suddenly she stood before a large dark room. The door stood open, but no one could see whither it led. She turned round alarmed. She had lost her way. It was as still everywhere as if she were outside, out of the world. She looked through the window, there was a street which she did not know at all; she knew not where she was. She hastened on; saw in the distance on the walls strange men and animals and places, and suddenly she gave a loud cry — the living, bodily, pitch-black devil came up to her, showing his teeth.

"Good God! forgive me my sins. I will never again be proud and vain; I will be good and honest!" she cried aloud, stretching out her hands.

"Why are you screaming so? Who are you?" screamed out the devil.

"I am Walpurga from the lake; and I have a child at home, and a husband, and a mother — they came and fetched me to be nurse to the crownprince, but I never wished it" —

"Oh! You are the nurse? You please me."

"But I do not wish to please you. I wish to please no one. I have my husband, and wish nothing more from anyone."

The black apparition laughed aloud.

"What are you doing here in the apartments of my master?"

"Who is your master? I wish nothing of your master! I and all good spirits praise God the Lord! Speak! what do you desire?"

"You stupid simpleton! My master is the brother of the queen, and I came here with him yesterday evening; I am his valet de chambre."

Walpurga could not yet understand what all this was. The duke, however, accompanied by the king, now fortunately came out of the apartment.

The duke asked the Moor in English what had happened, and the Moor told him also in English how the peasant's wife had taken him for the devil incarnate. The duke and the king laughed aloud.

"How did you come here?" asked the king.

"I lost my way in coming from the chapel," replied Walpurga. "My child will cry; I beg you, show me the way back to him."

The king signed to an approaching lacquey, to conduct her to her apartments; and as she was leaving, she heard the uncle, who was to be the chief godfather, say — "That is a powerful milch cow from the highlands."

When she reached her room, and saw herself again in the large looking-glass, she said to her image there:

"Thou'rt nothing but a cow, which can chatter, and which is dressed up in clothes. Well, it served thee right! Now thou know'st thy business!"

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

The night was a bad one. The crownprince felt the fright which the Moor of his uncle had caused his foster-mother. The physician went backwards and forwards, and sat up in the adjoining room. He gave orders to Mademoiselle Kramer that in future the nurse should not be allowed to leave her room without his permission.

To Walpurga this imprisonment was welcome, she wished to know nothing more of the whole world; her duty towards the child, her love for him, filled her soul; and as she lay on the sofa, she vowed to God that she would think no more of aught else. She looked at the new clothes, which lay spread out on the large table, and shook her head; the whole trumpery was now indifferent to her, almost hateful to her, for it had enticed her to evil; but the punishment had come quickly.

Walpurga had only short and often interrupted sleep, and when she closed her eyes, she saw herself always quite plainly and the Moor pursuing her. It was not till morning that she and the child gained many hours of quiet sleep. The great ceremony could take place at the time appointed.

When Baum brought the beautiful pillows, and the brocaded coverlet embroidered with two wild animals, he said softly to Walpurga as he passed:

"Keep a brave heart that you don't get sick again. For if you are sick again, they will discharge you at once, and send you away. I mean well by you, and that's why I say so."

He spoke quietly and softly, not altering his expression, so that Mademoiselle Kramer might remark nothing.

Walpurga looked after him with astonishment, and Baum too looked quite strange today in his grey linen undress costume.

"So thou'lt be sent away, if thou'rt ill!" thought Walpurga silently. "I am a cow. They were right. They take a cow out of the stall, when she is barren."

"I and thou and Müller's cow —" said she to the prince, as she again laid him to her breast, and laughed and jested and sang:

"Guggeru-guh.
In the morning at two,
Beasts without number
Are fast in their slumber.

Animals in cloister, feasting sour food,
Animals in palace, cooking all that's good;
And not forgetting by the way
Little children in their play."

Walpurga would have gladly sung and said still more, but there was so much running backwards and forwards today in the little prince's apartments; even the lady of the chamber came and said to Walpurga:

"Is it not true, you have all sorts of secret charms which you place under the pillow as a blessing for the child?"

"Yes, a branch of misletoe is good and a nail too dropped from a horse-shoe, I had them at home, but I have nothing of that kind here."

Walpurga had given information as to the secret charms she knew of, with a good deal of pride; but she grew frightened when instead of a smile, she caught the face of the mistress of the chamber, which became doubly long and severe.

"Mademoiselle Kramer," said she, "I make you responsible that this peasant woman does not carry on any of her superstitious nonsense with the child."

Walpurga received no orders at all, and she who had talked herself into being the first person in the palace, experienced for the first time how it is to hear oneself spoken of, as if one were nothing but empty air.

"I don't fret however about it, only I won't do you the favour of being ill, that you may send me away," said Walpurga to herself, laughing heartily, as the mistress of the chamber departed.

Now however a really beautiful moment arrived.

There came two maidens to dress the prince and Walpurga allowed herself to be also dressed by them; she took pleasure in being thus waited on.

The bells rang throughout the whole city, and the bells on the palace tower chimed in, while their tones vibrated through the vast building. Now came Baum too. He looked magnificent. The richly embroidered gala uniform with its silver lace, the red gold-embroidered waistcoat, the short light plush breeches, the white stockings and buckled shoes, all seemed as if they had come out of some enchanted shrine, and Baum knew what a magnificent figure he cut. He smiled as Walpurga stared at him; he knew what that look meant. But he could wait.

"We must not wish to reap prematurely," had been a frequent saying of the lord high chamberlain of the Baroness Steigeneck, and he understood it.

Baum announced a valet and two pages. They soon entered.

Heavy steps and words of command were heard in

the adjoining hall; a servant opened the door, and a detachment of the cuirassiers, a regiment to which the prince belonged as soon as he was named, entered the apartment likewise.

The procession with the prince was punctually in motion.

The valet walked in advance, the pages behind Mademoiselle Kramer and Walpurga. It was well that Baum walked by her side, for she was in such a state of timidity, that, as if seeking help, she looked about her. Baum understood this, and said softly: "Keep a brave heart, Walpurga!" She nodded gratefully, she could not speak a word. Through a line of cuirassiers, standing, as if lifeless, in glittering coats of mail with bare sabres, Walpurga carried the child, and suddenly it passed through her mind where she had been at this hour on the last Sunday; the lake with the sun gleaming on it, shone before her. If only Hansei could have seen this too! And Franz the son of the tailor Schneck is also in the cuirassiers, perhaps he is among these lifeless ones; yet they are all alive, for their eyes are bright. She looked up, but she did not perceive the son of the tailor Schneck, though he was in the line.

The prince's train with its escort passed on to the so-called great centre-gallery. It was there that the grandees of the whole procession assembled.

Walpurga received the order, to sit down with the prince on the lowest step of the throne.

She sat down, and looked about her on all sides upon a sea of splendour and magnificence, of beautifully embroidered attire, of flowers on ladies' heads,

of jewels, which glimmered like dew-drops on a meadow in the morning.

"Good morning, Walpurga! Pray don't rise!" said a sweet voice to her. It was Countess Irma, who had approached her. But scarcely had she spoken a few words, when the staff of the Lord steward knocked thrice on the floor, and the diamonds on its gold head glittered.

From a side apartment there marched in a train of halberdiers, with gay plumes on their heads.

Then came the king. He carried his helmet in his left hand which rested on his side, his face beaming with joyful seriousness.

By his side walked the duchess, a diamond crown on her head and wearing a long silk train, which two pages carried; behind followed a large and brilliant suite.

Irma quickly hastened to her post. The bells rang; the procession placed itself in motion. At the entrance to the palace chapel, the duchess took the child from the nurse, and carried it to the altar, where the priests were waiting in magnificent robes, and countless lights were burning.

Walpurga went forward like one robbed of sense, — it seemed to her as if not only all her clothes were torn from her body, but as if her body had left her soul. The child must have also felt what was taking place, for he cried loudly, but his crying was drowned by the tones of the organ and the voices of the singers, whilst as from the ground a hollow crashing sound arose. The order to kneel at the altar was unneeded: Walpurga did it spontaneously.

What a singing and thundering and ringing. The world is coming to an end! All is over. The painted angels on the ceiling are singing, the pillars are singing, — eternity is come.

Suddenly there was silence again.

The child received its name, not one, but eight; a whole column of the calendar had been emptied for the child.

From this moment however Walpurga knew nothing more.

It was not till she was again in her room with Mademoiselle Kramer, that she inquired:

"Well, how am I to call my prince now?"

"That we none of us know. He retains three names up to the period of his accession to the throne, then he himself chooses one of them, and in this name he rules, and with it the money is stamped."

"My baby," said Walpurga to the child, "my baby, I will say something to thee, now pay attention; the first ducat which thou hast stamped with thy name and image, thou must send to me! — See, how he gives me his hand upon it," cried she exultingly, as the child took hold of her hand. "Oh my Sunday child! The mistress of the chamber may scold it as superstition; but it is quite plain. I am a cow and thou art a Sunday child, and Sunday children understand the language of beasts, but only once every year, at midnight on Christmas eve; but thou art a prince, thou can'st of course do more!"

Walpurga was called into the queen's apartment. Here everything was so beautiful and still as if in some sparkling enchanted cave; nothing was to be

heard here of the noise in the world outside. The queen said.

"On the table there, there is a roll — there are a hundred gold pieces in it — that is your christening present from my brother and the other sponsors. Does that make you happy?"

"Oh Queen! If the lips of the man represented there on every gold piece, could speak, all the hundred could not say how happy I am. It is too much, we could buy our village with it! we could ...."

"Take it quietly! keep yourself calm! come here, here you have something else especially from me. This little ring is always to remind you of me and your hand is thus to be my hand doing good to the child."

"Oh Queen! You must be happy that you are able at once to say it all, when your heart is so full of blessed thoughts, and to do such good and great things. God must love you truly, that so much good is done through your hand. I thank you heartily, and I thank Him a thousand times, who has given it to you!"

"Walpurga, that does me more good than all that the archbishop and all have said to me. I will bear it in mind."

"I know not what I have said — but it all comes from you! When one is with you, one gets I know not how! It seems to me as if I was standing in the most holy place in the church. Oh what a divine creature you are, a genuinely good human heart! I will tell your child so even when it doesn't understand, it will feel it already, and it shall get none but good thoughts of you from me! I beg you beforehand, forgive me, if I ever injure you by one thought, and if in anything ....." She could say no more.

The queen signed to her to be quiet and held out her hand to her; neither spoke a word more. Angels were indeed passing through the silent room.

Walpurga went away. She looked unembarrassed at all the court gentlemen, and yet she was not bold; other human beings were scarcely present to her.

When she was again with the child, she said to it:

"Yes, drink up my whole soul! It is all thine! If thou'rt not a man, in whom God and the world can take delight, thou'rt not worthy of having such a mother!"

Mademoiselle Kramer looked at Walpurga in amazement. But the latter had no wish to explain what was passing in her mind; she sat still, as if she was still hearing the organ in the chapel and the angels singing in the ceiling; and yet the room was silent.

"It isn't this, which makes me so happy," said she at last, looking again at the money. "It must be like this when we get to Heaven and our Lord God says: It is right that thou art here! — Oh, if I could only fly up to Heaven. I don't know, what to do with myself."

She tore open all her clothes; the world was too narrow for her.

"Thank God, the day is over!" said Walpurga, when she lay down to rest that evening. "It has been a heavy day, but a beautiful one, too beautiful ever to come again!"

EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

(Irma to her friend Emmy.)

.... How do I like the great world? The great world, dear Emmy, is only a small one. But I understand why it is called the great world. It is a kingdom of Heaven for itself. Two suns rise daily, namely their Majesties; a gracious look, and an obliging word from the one or the other produces a bright day, an ignoring manner produces dull weather.

The queen lives in an exclusive world of feeling, and would like to raise every one else to her exalted frame of mind; there is something of a posthumous Jean Paul in her, creeper-like, the twilight of feelings, and never broad daylight; she is extremely gracious to me, still we both feel in each other, that there is something in her and in me, which does not harmonize.

I don't know, why I now so often think of a saying of my father's: When you are on good terms with any one, friendly, aye even affectionate — think how it would be if you fell out with each other, or were at enmity with each other.

This idea follows me like a ghost, I know not why. It is a demon that pursues me.

All here think me endlessly naive, because I have the courage to think for myself. It is only that I was not born with the spectacles and tight-lacing of tradition. Men dress themselves inwardly also, as the fashion requires. The mistress of the chamber pleases me best, she is a walking law very carefully arranged with *poudre de riz.* The ladies here turn her into ridicule.

I, on the contrary, find those people worthy of compassion, who are obliged to employ cosmetic aid. Oh Emmy, you wouldn't believe how many people are horribly boring, and bore themselves, when they can't slander each other. Very few people understand how to be wholesomely merry. But I want to tell you about the Countess Brinkenstein.

It is a pity that I can't give you the lecture verbally, which she delivered to me upon etiquette. There was a good deal that was beautiful in it. She says: one ought to think as little about etiquette as about religion; heresy and apostasy begin with reasoning; we ought to be happy in having laws, instead of only making them.

The countess gives also precepts *à propos*, like the peripatetic Socrates long ago. In the park of the summer palace, there is a beautiful view from a projecting rock; round the rock there is an iron railing. "See, dear countess," said the high priestess of etiquette to me — she seems to have taken a great affection for me — "because we know that there is a railing here, we can sit here quietly; otherwise we could not stay without being giddy. Such are the severe laws of the court. Do away with the railing, and every day there will be a fall to complain of."

The king enjoys conversing with the Brinkenstein, he likes what is measured, but he likes merry freedom also. The queen is too serious, it is an everlasting organ tone; but after the organ one can't dance, and we are young and dance gladly and often. The countess must have praised me to the king, for he often speaks with me, and in a manner which plainly says: it is not to be doubted that we understand each other.

June 1st Night.

It is tiresome, dear Emmy, that my former scribbling has no date. I do not now know when it was written. Auld lang syne, as it says in the pretty Scotch song.

You are right when you reproach me that I write my letters only for myself and not for her addressed; but it is only so when it is a necessity with me and not when you wish for tidings. But you are wrong, when you regard this as egotism. It is not that. I am no egotist. Those around me take hold of me so entirely. Oh, why are you not among them? Daily, nightly, hourly ....

But I will improve myself in letter writing. I doubt if I can do so, but I will ....

The king distinguishes me especially, and the favour of the whole court surrounds me. If only the devil were not always whispering to me ....

I send you my photograph. Birds' wings are now worn on hats. The king shot this eagle himself, and gave me a piece of the wing.

Oh these wonderful days and nights! If one only need not sleep! I play a good deal of music, I now sing only Schumann, his music throws a magic veil over the soul, full of fire, and yet so agreeable, and one may try to extricate oneself as one will, one can never shake it off. I veil myself in it with delight.

I have just been singing late in the night "The Heaven has kissed the earth," I could not leave off.—You know my way of repeating the same song again and again. I can't bear any potpourri of feeling. — I sat at last in the window, and — who glided by? I dare not say, I will not know, who it was ... There is a buzzing in the lamp on my table, a moth has

burnt itself to death in it. The moth did not wish to die, he thought the light was only a glowing calyx, and he perished in it.

A beautiful death in the summer night, amid singing, in the light of the fiery calyx. — Goodnight.

June 3rd.

Wherever I go and wherever I am, I am always excited, I know not why; or perhaps, I am always thinking that these lines to you, my dear Emmy, are lying in my portfolio. If any one at court knew what they contain! I have wished already to burn these papers. I pray you to do so. You will, won't you? Or hide them in some safe place. I cannot do otherwise, I must tell you everything.

The queen is very gracious to me. In her present condition, there is something in her peculiarly touching, I could almost say, holy.

"Man is the temple of God, and a young mother especially, a young royal mother," said the archbishop yesterday when he visited us.

How sublime is the idea!

I regard the queen now very differently. When she said to me yesterday, "the king speaks with the greatest love of you, Countess Irma, it delights me!" All praise be to etiquette, that I could bend low and kiss the queen's hand.

Her hand is now so full and round ....

June 5th.

The merriest hour of the day is at breakfast. I don't know how others manage to do anything com-

monplace after this olympic hour. I take my flight into the boundless realms of music.

The king is very good to me. His is a deep noble nature. When I was walking yesterday in the park with him, and we kept up the same step so well, he said: "You are like the good comrade to me — we keep the same pace. No woman ever walked with me like that. With the queen I have always to slacken my usual pace."

"That is only just now?"

"No, always. Will you allow me, when we are alone, to call you my good comrade?"

We stood still, like two children, who have lost their way in the wood, and suddenly know no longer where they are. "We will turn back" was all I could say.

We turned back to the palace. I admire the king that he could at once enter into the most serious discussions with his minister. None but a mind of innate power and careful training could have done that.

One thing more I must say. I will meanwhile deposit it with you.

I should like to have told the king, that I believed the Queen was going to take a step which might involve heavy consequences upon him, upon herself, and who knows upon whom besides. But I had not the courage now to speak of the queen, and the physician had taken from me all courage to do anything in this matter. I know I am speaking to you in riddles — I will explain to you later what I mean, remind me to do so — it must be decided in a few weeks.

The queen has not confided to me anything of the

matter, I could have said freely, that I have only put things together. — But enough, I won't torment you with riddles.

My best friend is however the physician, a fine nature, and made still finer by cultivation. He keeps himself at all times at the highest point. I have never seen him over hasty, lost, or uncertain. The old fashioned word "wise" is applicable to him. He does not care for what is clever, for he is wise. And at the same time he has a very exact and complete manner of expressing himself, and he has beautiful hands, the true priestly hand, formed for blessing; he is always equal, never extreme, and the most beautiful thing is that he never uses a superlative. I once said so to him: he agreed with me and added: "I should like to forbid the world any superlative for the next fifty years; that would oblige men to think and to feel simply and definitely." Don't you think, dear Emmy, that that is perfectly true? We will form an anti-superlative society. I admire the man, but I shall never follow him wholly. Through him, I have learned to believe that there is lofty wisdom on earth. While he was still a military doctor, he was a great friend of my father's, he was then professor in Switzerland, and for eighteen years he has been here as physician in ordinary. The man would please you; to know him is an enrichment for life. If I should try to note down for you what he says, it would be only half of it; his whole personality belongs to it. He has the most convincing tone of truth, a rich chest voice, they say he used also long ago to sing very well; he is an excellent man and he loves me like his niece, I shall often have much to tell you about him. Most of all it delights me that he has

also a good dose of humour, which gives him sufficient salt not to be reckoned among sugar water men.

Colonel Bronnen is the best, perhaps the only true friend of the physician's, and the latter said to me a short time ago, that there was something in the colonel, which much resembled the youthful appearance of my father.

June 15th.

Oh how ugly and how repulsive is the birth and death of man! To die, to be laid in the ground; the eyes which sparkled and shone, the mouth which smiled — all mouldering away! Man's death is a barbarity. Why do we know of death? We must be immortal, or it were a cruelty to let us men alone know that we must die. The moth doesn't know that he must die: he thinks the burning light is a gay and brilliant flower, and he dies in the flowery fire.

Since yesterday evening we have been in great anxiety about the queen, in dread of the approaching event. Oh! she was so good, so angelically pure. —— No, she is, she will remain so, she will live. I have prayed for her with my whole heart. I will have no more doubts, prayer must help.

When I met the king to-day, he scarcely looked at me. It was better for me. Something was germinating within me, I have broken it off, I will tear it up by the roots; it may not be! I will be his comrade, his good, his best comrade.

My piano, my musical enjoyments, pictures, statuettes, my bird — why do they now all appear so alien to me! A human being, a two-fold human being is in danger. What is all the trumpery of the world? With all of it together, we cannot save a man! Is original

sin a truth, that on that account man sees the light with the pains of death?

I should like to read some book. There is none for such a time of distress. There is no such thing as thought. Nothing, nothing at all All the wisdom of all the books is nothing . . . . .

June 16th.

Hallelujah! I have just come out of church. If I could but sing these words to you. I have sung the Hallelujah, as if my whole soul were singing up to God.

Hallelujah!

All is well!

A crownprince is born.

The queen is well, the king happy, the whole world beautiful, and a blue sky with not a cloud on it, is over head. Thank God, that I have come quickly out of the perplexity! Perhaps I only talked myself into it. There was nothing in it, nothing at all in it. I don't understand the gracious expressions of the court, I am a silly convent plant. Is it not true? I see you laugh, I see the dimple in your cheek. I send you a kiss!

Oh! all is good and innocent and sacred and happy, and — If I could but compose! I could now make a grand piece of music. There is a dumb Beethoven in my soul.

June 18th.

A peasant woman from the mountains is wet-nurse to the crownprince. I was with her by the king's desire. I was standing by the prince's cradle, and the king came. He said softly to me:

"It is true, an angel is standing by the child's cradle!" He laid his hand on mine, which was resting on the edge of the cradle.

The king went away. And imagine what now happened. The peasant woman, a fresh cheerful looking woman with sensible blue eyes, coarse and hardy, a thorough country beauty, to whom I had been kind that I might cheer her and allow her to feel no home sickness, — the peasant woman said to my very face, with the utmost bluntness: "You are a bad woman! You have exchanged amorous looks with the king ..."

Emmy! How right you were, when you always used to say to me: you idealize the people, but they are just as wicked and corrupt as the great world, without the curb and bridle of education.

Still — what does the peasant woman concern me? Certain figures are only necessary pieces.

No, she is an honest intelligent woman. She asked pardon for her impudence. I continue to like her. Yes, I certainly do.

June 25th.

The king shows me the greatest kindness. Only yesterday he said in passing:

"If you ever have a secret, Countess Irma, make me your confidant!"

He feels that I have no domestic support in my brother, and I live so far removed from my father.

Colonel Bronnen, of the Queen's regiment, has been extremely attentive to me. He is usually a very reserved man. Oh! I envy all men their reserve. I possess nothing at all of it, and one flatters oneself that this everlasting unreservedness is true honesty, and it is all the time nothing else than weakness.

Bronnen says, that he has sometimes received letters from you. Is it possible that a thought of you finds its way into the palace, and that it is not mine?

I am delighted that we shall be going to the summer palace in another fortnight. Towns ought to vanish away in the summer. We ought to be able to place the houses out in the woods, on the hills, and in the valleys; and in the winter they could come together again.

Yesterday evening, when we were sitting in the verandah, there was a good deal of merriment, for my brother Bruno depicted to us how it would look if by some charm the four feet of all the bedsteads in the town were made alive, and came stumping along with their contents and walking through the promenades. It was very ludicrous, and there were indeed a good many things which were unsuitable; but Bruno with all his want of good manners has plenty of charm, and he knew how to represent all with extreme discretion and piquancy.

This was how I got the idea of the migration of houses and I depicted that.

It was a merry evening, full of laughter and jest. It is still ringing in my ear, while I am now writing it to you. The king has a new walking stick — he has a beautiful collection of such things — and this walking stick pays court to me. Like gladly consorts with like, and I am said to be clever, and this walking stick is clever *par excellence*. He is the Privy Counsellor to the legation, Baron Schnabelsdorf. Imagine to yourself a beardless bachelor, always faultlessly dressed, his hair exactly calculated and brushed up to the top of his head like a cock's comb. He is regarded

as a political authority. He has just come from Rome — he was before that attached to the embassy in Paris, Madrid, and I think, Stockholm; he talks easily and readily. He must have a useful family spirit, who studies for him, for he knows everything: the cut of the sleeves of Queen Elizabeth, the new discoveries in the milky way, the excavations in Nineveh; he knows everything. The gentlemen and ladies amuse themselves sometimes with reading one or more articles in the Conversations-Lexikon, and then leading the conversation afterwards to them; but the omniscient Baron knows dates and circumstances still more accurately. And he always has a bonbonnière full of piquant anecdotes. He is almost always about the king; they say he is selected for a high position.

Now what do you think? Shall I marry the man? My brother wishes it. He maintains that Schnabelsdorf has not sent him to me with proposals, but I believe it nevertheless. — I should be obliged to laugh out loud, if I were to stand before the altar with the learned walking stick. But still it flatters me, that such a thoroughly learned man should choose me for his bride. I must also be excessively learned and clever. Pay respect to me.

A thousand loves and kisses from
your ever spoilt

IRMA.

Postscript. The Queen's brother, the hereditary prince * * * and his consort were at the christening. She scarcely speaks at all, but she is beautiful. It is universally said, that the hereditary prince must separate from her, for she has no child. How terrible

it must be to the poor creature, if she loves the prince, and this seems to be the case. The princess must have seen my inclination towards her. She treats me with excessive favour, and I am the one of those to whom she talked most. She wishes too that I should ride out with her. The fête was grand and splendid. In the chapel I wore a white moirée dress, the veil fastened to my coiffure; at the banquet — the gentleman of the bedchamber took me in, I am considered here as having a poetic nature and the gentleman of the bedchamber who had already presented me with his poems (you know them, he has masked his sublime feelings in the mountain dialect) likes to be with me, he speaks fearfully silly stuff though at table — well, at the banquet, I wore a sea green silk, with a square bodice à la Madonna, and a simple wreath of heath in my hair. Every one told me, I looked beautiful and I believe it myself.

SECOND BOOK.

FIRST CHAPTER.

The life in the palace resumed its fixed course and habitual forms. There were no more bulletins issued as to the welfare of the queen and the crownprince. The amnesty published in consequence of the happy event was received with great satisfaction.

Irma was much in the apartments of the crown-prince, and she endeavoured to enter into the feelings of the peasant woman, who had been transplanted into a perfectly new existence. She delighted in the ludicrous images and reflections which this woman of the people formed of this existence, and she thus aroused a certain bold revolution of all things in Walpurga; her own peculiar way of seeing things often harmonized with Walpurga's unworldly nature; and when Irma was not present, the nurse could talk for hours to the child, overdoing herself in various ludicrous though not always satisfactory expressions.

A deep spring of happiness and contentment, of upright purpose and of all that makes man true, gushed out of Walpurga's soul, and overflowed for the benefit of the child, whom she had placed at her heart and who grew in her heart.

Days passed away. With constant regularity the prince was brought daily once to the queen; that was the great hour of the day, to be succeeded again by

quiet wholesome life in the apartments of the new born.

The physician extended the accustomed order, for he came one day and said:

"To-day is a beautiful calm day — it will do the prince good if we send him into the open air for the first time. Let us arrange it so; at eleven o'clock drive with Walpurga and the prince to the Nymphen-Allee, and when there, go up and down with the child under the fir-trees; you can also sit down — stay half an hour, and then come back and remove at once into the new apartments. Walpurga, you have behaved yourself well; continue to do so — let nothing occur to change you, and you will give us all pleasure, and have pleasure yourself."

Walpurga was happy.

"We are going to have a drive," cried she to the child when the physician had left. "God gives all to thee in sleep, but thou givest me always some of it. Is it not so? Thou hast a good heart. And I will give thee my heart too."

Walpurga would have gone on in this way, but Mademoiselle Kramer warned her, stroking her cheeks:

"You have got hot cheeks again! Show your love to the prince by rest and obedience, and not by such exaggerated words."

"You are right," said Walpurga; "it is true. I used not to be so; I have always been merry, but gentle — never so giddy as now," began she, after having gone up and down the room many times, and at last sat down at the window.

"I will tell you what I want."

"So, so! Do you want anything?"

"Yes, the chief thing. I have nothing to do; I don't know what to set my hands to. It is nothing but chattering and dressing and undressing, eating and drinking, and I am getting just stupid. When the doctor comes again, tell him he must give me something to do. I will carry up wood, or whatever there is to do. They are now making hay in the palace-garden; if I might be there, I should be fresher again. No man ever surpassed me in mowing grass; Gruber-sepp has often said, 'The women folk whet the scythe seven times oftener than the men;' but that wasn't the case with me."

"That won't do, but you shall have exercise; I will take care of that."

"Come, thou shalt now go out into the open air," said Walpurga turning to the prince.

"Open the cage and fly away!
Out into the wide world fly!
Where does my little treasure lie?
Open the cage and fly away!

"It is a pity that the birds have done singing. Yes, child! they only sing so long as the young ones are in the nest; but I shall have thee a whole year in the nest, and will sing songs to thee. I can do it better than all the birds!"

And she sang:

"We two are so united,
So happily allied,
That blissful are the moments
When we are side by side.

My heart doth wear a fetter
Which thou hast o'er me thrown,
And I my life would wager,
That none a heavier own."

"Bravo! splendid!" cried Countess Irma, as she entered. I will learn that song — sing it once more."

Walpurga sang it again, and at the second verse Irma joined in.

"The song doesn't really suit for a child," said Walpurga, "but what does such a boy know whether a cow is lowing or a bird is singing — it is all one to him! Are you going out with us? We are to have a drive to-day."

"I should have liked to have gone, but I may not," replied Countess Irma.

"Then, you may not do everything?" asked Walpurga.

Irma was surprised. "How do you mean?" she said in a sharp tone.

"If I have said anything stupid, forgive me — I only meant to say: Are you also here in service, as maid of honour?"

"Yes, one may call it so. All men must serve, and the king and the queen must serve God."

"We too must do that."

"Yes, but not so hardly as princes; they have a much greater responsibility. But what am I saying? Be glad that you need not know everything. I have brought you a copy here, and you shall learn to write after it. I have already to thank you for something; since I have resolved to teach you to write, I write so much more plainly for myself —"

Irma stopped suddenly; the fact filled her with ideas — "then you shall learn to write well," she concluded.

Baum came and announced that the carriage had

driven up. Irma took her departure, and said she would meet Walpurga in the park.

They went down the stairs, Baum opened the carriage-door, Mademoiselle Kramer got in first, took the child from Walpurga until she was seated, and could take it herself again; Baum took his post as second lacquey on the step behind, the four horses pulled, stepped out, and the carriage rolled away.

"Are we driving?" asked Walpurga.

"Yes, certainly."

"I thought we were flying; I don't even hear the wheels rolling."

"We never hear them — the tires of the wheels are covered with india-rubber."

"They also then put on list, such as we wear when we walk on smooth floors? Oh dear, how clever men are, and how we know nothing at all out yonder! It is true, we live like the cows; all the difference is that we don't eat grass! But what is all that?" she exclaimed suddenly, "they are beating drums, and the soldiers are rushing out! Is there a fire somewhere?"

"That is all on our account; the guard turn out when any of the court drive past. Look, now they are presenting, then they put their arms down and go back again into the guard-room. They are soldiers of the crownprince's regiment — it belongs to him."

"Then when he grows up, he can play with live soldiers?"

It required much self-command in Mademoiselle Kramer — it was not in vain that she had sixteen ancestors — only to give a slight convulsive movement at these words of Walpurga's, then she made a face as if she were repressing a yawn, her features going through

strange transformations; she dared not laugh — a really high servant must experience, hear, and see everything, and remain all the while like a moveable table or a moveable plate; and small as was Walpurga's rank, she might not be laughed at; she was the wet-nurse of his royal Highness the crownprince. Mademoiselle Kramer did not laugh, and only said evasively:

"When we drive back past the guard, it all happens again."

"Now may I ask what is the good of it?"

"Yes, certainly; everything has a good reason. This serves, to accustom people, and soldiers especially, to pay respect."

"But our prince can know nothing of it."

"We must pay respect also to him, though he knows nothing of it. I will tell you something; it will be good for you: — When you speak of his Majesty the king, and of her Majesty the queen, and even when you think of them, never say just the king or the queen, speak and think always of his Majesty and her Majesty; you will then never be beguiled into speaking or thinking of them irreverently. Pay attention to that."

Walpurga scarcely heard this lecture.

"Oh God!" she exclaimed, "how wisely is the world arranged! It must have taken people surely many thousand years, to have brought it to this pitch!"

"Yes, indeed, many thousand years. But you needn't nod at the people bowing on the road; they are not doing so to you."

"I like though to do it for my prince, till he can do it himself. I see in all, how they would like to

look at him. My baby! all the people are greeting thee! how well is it with thee! Oh how beautiful such a carriage is! We can sit just as if we were in a bed, and behave as if we were in a room, and yet we can see everything, and . . . Heyday! It does go quick!"

They turned into the park, the carriage drove past the swannery, and Walpurga exclaimed:

"I could fancy myself in fairy land!"

They alighted at the Nymphen-Allee: it was shady and fragrant there. When Walpurga had alighted, and was carrying the child in her arms, she said:

"Open thine eyes, look about thee! Here is the whole world for thee! There are trees and meadows and the blue sky, and even thy father cannot fetch that down for thee, thou must gain that for thyself by being good; and if thou art good, and I keep so too, we shall then both come up there again together!"

"Sit down here, Walpurga; don't talk any more now," said Mademoiselle Kramer.

She had terrible anxiety about Walpurga. She chattered away so nonsensically, and was as unmanageable as a foal set at liberty.

She therefore repeated:

"Say it all to me only, and speak softly. I should be sorry if the lacqueys behind us laughed at you. Look! the outrider yonder—that is my brother's son!"

Walpurga now saw for the first time that two lacqueys, one of whom was Baum, were walking behind them.

The carriage drove up and down in the side avenues.

Walpurga paused as if spell-bound before a marble statue.

"Isn't that very beautiful?" asked Mademoiselle Kramer.

"Fye!" replied Walpurga; "it is perfectly abominable! And men and women go by and look at such a thing!"

Mademoiselle Kramer had been against them herself at the time that the old king had placed these statues; but the court had found them very fine, and so they must be so; and by degrees she found them so herself.

They went into a side avenue, and here Walpurga sat down on a seat, dreaming away and knowing little more of the world than the child in her arms.

"Hi! who is coming there?" she asked as if awaking.

Riding between two horsemen, on a glossy black horse, sat a female figure; her habit was blue, and floated far away; on her head she wore a man's hat, from which there streamed a long blue veil.

"I could have fancied that was our countess."

"So it is! They are alighting; His Majesty the king, and their royal highnesses the hereditary prince and princess are with her. They are coming to us!" said Mademoiselle Kramer. "Sit still; as a nurse, it is not necessary for you to be polite."

Nevertheless Walpurga couldn't help grasping at her hat to feel if the tassel hung properly behind, and if the bunch of flowers were still in front.

Mademoiselle Kramer begged their royal highnesses not to look at the child, it was asleep and looking at it might waken it.

"See, your Majesty," said Irma, "how profound are all the laws of nature. The waking eye may arouse

the sleeping child. Deep in every human soul there rests a sleeping child's soul. It is not well, when out of sympathy or curiosity we scare away the eternal childhood."

"I should like to know how you always come to have such original thoughts," replied the king.

"I do not know myself," replied Irma playing with her whip. "I only have the courage always to say what I think, and then it sounds original. Most people are the changelings of themselves; they were changed in the cradle of education."

The king laughed. Walpurga, however, quickly turning in her two thumbs, exclaimed:

"Changeling! That isn't to be said or heard. One may not speak of anything of that sort before a child, not seven months old. The evil spirits have always power over it, even when the child has been baptized."

She breathed upon the child three times, to dispel from him any evil charm.

The princess looked sadly at the nurse and child, but spoke not a word.

"I don't understand a syllable of what the nurse says," said the prince. Walpurga grew as red as fire.

"Why are you looking at me so?" asked Countess Irma. "Do I look strange to you?"

"Not at all, but do you know what you look like? Like a mermaid. She gets up just like that, and her dress falls in a sea of folds all round her."

Irma explained laughingly to the prince and his consort in high German what Walpurga had said, and the former nodded to her now as kindly as one would nod to an honest animal, to whom one means well, but to whom one cannot render oneself intelligible.

"But Countess Irma has no swan feet. Don't believe that, Walpurga!" laughed the king. "Come now, mermaid."

The party mounted their horses and rode away.

It was time for the prince also to return home.

During the drive everything had been brought into the apartments of the ground floor, which they were now to occupy. They had here morning, noon, and evening sun, and the apartments opened out into the park, where still in broad daylight the black bird sang, orange trees sent forth their fragrant odour, great trees whispered, and a high fountain always splashed and murmured.

Walpurga was quite delighted, especially with the fountain. "On level ground it's more comfortable," she often said. "I could fancy I had come back from a great journey, and the rooms are so beautifully cool, and my little watchman sleeps by day like a watchman, and — and — —"

Walpurga too fell asleep in the bright day time.

SECOND CHAPTER.

Walpurga was growing accustomed to her new life, only she was often anxious, because no tidings came from home.

There came no letter, but a messenger. A lacquey entered the room and announced:

"Outside is a woman from Walpurga's home. She wishes to speak to you for a couple of minutes."

"I will come! Who is it?"

"No, receive her here!" said Mademoiselle Kramer.

The lacquey hastened out and ushered in old Zenza.

"Hi, it's you, Zenza? Do you bring me anything from my child, from my husband, from my mother? For God's sake, what has happened? Are they ill?"

"No, thank God, all sound and well, and I am to greet you finely from them all."

Walpurga gave a hearty glance into the cunning eyes of Zenza; these eyes were all at once good and true, for she had seen her child. Zenza continued smilingly:

"Well, I'm glad that you still know me. How evil men are! They told me that you wouldn't now know me at all, 'cause you have got so grand. No, you were an honest girl all your life, I have always said so."

"Well, well, it's all right; but what do you want?"

"You must help me. If you don't help me, my Thomas will kill himself and I shall spring into the lake. You will help me, won't you? Look, I put myself at your feet, you must help me, and I am too almost a sort of second cousin of your poor father's, and if your father were still alive, he would tell you, yes he calls from heaven down to you: Walpurga, help Zenza, or I won't forgive you through eternity."

"Get up then! What is it then? How can I help you? With what?"

"I won't get up, I would rather die at your feet, till you have said, you will help me."

"I will help you as far as I can."

Mademoiselle Kramer now interfered, and said that Zenza must be calmer, or she must not remain a moment longer in the room.

Zenza rose and asked:

"Is that the Queen?"

Walpurga and Mademoiselle Kramer laughed, and Zenza at last brought out her desire:

Down below in front of the palace, the guard wouldn't let him come in, her son Thomas was standing, he had been sentenced to two years' in the house of correction for poaching again and he was all the while innocent; it ran in his blood to be fond of hunting, it had been the case also with his father, and he had shot nothing at all but a single little buck chamois, and for that he was now to go to the house of correction. He had sworn that he would kill himself or murder some one, so that they might behead him, rather than be again in prison, and Walpurga would have two, aye three human lives on her conscience, if she did not help. She must procure Zenza an audience with the king or the queen, that she might throw herself at their feet and beg for mercy.

"And your husband sends me, and so does the host of the chamois," concluded Zenza. "They have both said, it would be an easy thing for you to help me in it. All my life I will lay myself at your feet, if you will do it."

"Yes, I would gladly do it, but I have no opportunity. Things don't go on here as they do with us at home."

"You can find an opportunity, I'm sure, you are so clever; in the whole country they all say so, I have known that long enough, and I have said it too, I said so on the last St. Leonhard's day, the tailor Schneck can bear me witness, and the weaver Wastl also: Walpurga stands there, said I, as if she were one of the least, but she is the first in the whole country; you'll

see what she'll come to some day, and her cleverness and goodness will come to light. Now Walpurga, you'll do it, won't you?"

"Yes, if there is an opportunity."

"But I cannot wait. To-morrow by daylight Thomas is to go to the house of correction, and if he is not freed to-day, he will go on to murder and death."

"My good woman," interrupted Mademoiselle Kramer, "His Majesty the king has published a universal amnesty on the birth of the crown prince, so your son is included in that, is he not?"

"No. But it's this. All the courts in the land are set against my Thomas. See, it all stands here, the host of the chamois has written it all down, better than I can say it. Before the noonday bell rings, the paper must go to the king, or it will be too late. Down below there, in front of the castle, my Thomas is walking up and down, and it hangs upon this, whether he goes into the kingdom of heaven or down into hell. He will shoot the first man he meets and himself too at once, he has a loaded double barrelled pistol with him; he will shoot himself dead in front of the castle, if I come out and there is nothing."

"Yes, but I cannot run to the king as I would to the host of the chamois. I would gladly do it."

"I must sit down, my knees are breaking," exclaimed Zenza, and Mademoiselle Kramer hastened to bring her a chair. She sat down, hung down her head and folded her hands across her knees, and heavy tears fell on the hard, bony, thick-veined hands.

Walpurga signed to Mademoiselle Kramer, who comforted her. She wanted to tell her that Zenza was none of the most honest, and her offspring Thomas

certainly none either; but Mademoiselle Kramer turned round and said:

"I have an expedient. The brother of the Countess of Wildenort is aide-de-camp to his Majesty and can bring a report in half an hour and fetch the parole. Walpurga, go to Countess Irma, and beg her to give this paper to her brother, that he may lay it before his Majesty."

"Yes, yes, do it, go! Oh God, what a clever angel thou hast with thee, Walpurga. But go now, don't delay. May I stay a moment longer, or shall I wait below in front of the castle?"

"No, wait here, my good woman," said Mademoiselle Kramer consolingly. "Go, Walpurga, go," said she, as she stood still, staring at the letter she held before her.

Walpurga went. When she reached the door of the countess's room, she heard her singing that song of Rückert's to Schumann's expressive melody:

"He came to me hither
In storm and rain,
And daring and bold
My heart he hath ta'en.
Say with whom did it lie?
Did he love, or did I?
'Twas the two that came meeting together."

The lady's maid announced her, and Irma broke off in the middle of repeating the song, when Walpurga entered.

"Oh! welcome! What brings such a good thing to me?"

Walpurga hesitatingly advanced her request and handed the paper.

"Take courage!" said Irma consolingly.

She pressed the bell and ordered a lacquey who entered: "Tell my brother to come to me at once." Then turning to Walpurga she continued: "I will send a word or two with this petition for mercy. Only be quiet. It delights me to be able to grant you a request. I have long wanted to ask you, if you would not like to have some wish fulfilled. The king will grant pardon."

Walpurga wanted to interrupt, but everything went as if bewitched. The aide-de-camp was already there, Irma gave the paper to him, begged him to wait a few moments, as she herself would add a few lines.

The aide-de-camp took his leave, and Irma, passing her hand over Walpurga's face, said:

"I am stroking away all sadness from your face. Be happy, I give you my word, that the man is saved. Go now to the poor woman and quiet her meanwhile; I will bring the answer to you in your room."

Walpurga could not speak. She wanted to say something, but — the petition for mercy was already gone, and it is well that it is so, thought she, though a bad man is receiving a benefit, it will perhaps make him better. As Walpurga left the Countess' room, and stood for a moment to recover herself at the door, she heard the singing within begin again.

She was more calm when she reached her room, and said to Zenza:

"You may depend upon it, your Thomas is saved; but give me here your hand and promise me that you will keep your word that Thomas shall become an honest man, and that you won't help him again to sell his stolen goods and to hide his cunning ways. Yes,

I must say so to you; don't look so amazed at me; I have staked a great deal for you."

"Thou may'st indeed say so," replied Zenza half assenting, half mocking, "thou mak'st the whole country happy, thou'rt the pride of us all. On Sunday in front of the church I will say what influence thou hast here, and people 'll believe me. Thy mother was my playfellow, and if my Thomas had got so honest a woman as thou'rt, he would have been thrifty too. He must take an honest wife now, I won't have it otherwise!"

Zenza was sitting over a good cup of coffee, which Mademoiselle Kramer had prepared for her, and the kind housekeeper filled up her cup again and again.

"If I could only give my son some of it! Oh, why does he now stay out there below! But it is all right, that is his punishment; he is standing on the lookout, not after game though, now it's something quite different."

Zenza was very talkative, and Mademoiselle Kramer was very much delighted with the evident goodness and motherly love of the old woman.

When Zenza had emptied her cup and had eaten almost all the cake, she said:

"This little bit of sugar here, will you let me take it away with me? It shall be an eternal remembrance that I have drunk coffee in the king's palace."

Mademoiselle Kramer packed up besides a piece of cake in a paper, and said: "You can take that to your son."

Zenza was inexhaustible in thanks, she was now in very great good humour. She begged to be allowed to see the prince also, but Walpurga would not suffer that. She well knew why. The old Zenza was looked

upon at home as a witch, and if this was not true, and was perhaps a superstition, Walpurga thought — still there was no knowing. She had already become so politic, that she pleaded a prohibition of the physician's, that no stranger was to be allowed to see the crown-prince.

Zenza now related what a commotion it had made in the whole country, when Walpurga was so suddenly fetched away to the court, and that nothing else was talked of. Everybody on Sunday had got late to church, because they had remained standing by Walpurga's house, looking at the house as if there were anything new about it, and Hansei had been obliged to show his cow to half the congregation, as if there were anything particular in it; that the whole village now shared his thoughts of Walpurga; and that the forest warden, the bridegroom of her friend, had got the good post so quickly, they all well knew had been done by Walpurga.

Walpurga might protest as much as she would that she knew nothing of it: Zenza would not give it up; and praised her even on account of her modesty.

The time passed quickly. With a countenance beaming with joy, Countess Irma came in, bringing the king's pardon.

Zenza would have fallen down before her and have kissed her feet, but Irma held her up and said:

"I have something besides for you. Here! Take this, that you may not only be free, but that you may make yourselves some merriment."

She gave her a piece of gold.

The eyes of the old Zenza sparkled and she said:

"If the gracious princess ever needs anybody, who

will go into the fire for her, she has only to think of Zenza and Thomas."

She would have said a great deal more, but Walpurga spoke:

"Your Thomas is waiting before the door down below. Make haste and go down to him."

"Do you see, gracious princess, how good she is? She deserves to be so happy."

"Walpurga, you could give the woman the money for your husband," said Mademoiselle Kramer.

"I'll take with me whatever you have!"

"No, I will send it, I must wait a little," said Walpurga hesitatingly. She could not explain, that she trusted neither Zenza nor her son.

"Here" — said Irma again — "here, take this to Walpurga's child from me."

She unfastened from her neck a black cord with a gold heart, and said:

"Take that to Walpurga's child and the handkerchief too!" — she untied a small green silk handkerchief, and gave it to the woman.

"Oh what a beautiful neck," cried Zenza. Walpurga repeated her reminder that she should now go to her son. Irma was very happy to have accomplished the pardon. Walpurga dared not say that Zenza was alien to her, aye almost hateful to her, and that the red Thomas was one of the worst. She comforted herself that all would certainly be well. "Bad men can grow better, else all talk of repentance were only lies and frauds."

Meanwhile Zenza went hastily out of the palace, holding the document up high in her hand.

"Is my reckoning cancelled?" asked Thomas, spitting on the ground as he spoke.

"Yes, thank God! See, what a mother can do!"

"I haven't much to thank you for. Why did you bring me into the world? But it's grand, that the great snarling justice gets a slap on the chops. Now mother, I am as thirsty as three bailiff's clerks. Waiting has almost consumed me. Haven't you got anything more?"

"Yes indeed I have. See here!"

She showed her son the piece of gold, and with admirable art he made it vanish from her hand into his own pocket.

"What is this too?" he asked, as he observed the little gold heart, which she had pulled with it out of her pocket.

"I am to take that to Walpurga's child. A beautiful princess gave it to me for the child, and the silk handkerchief too."

"Hansei's child has enough, when it gets a silk handkerchief," said Thomas, appropriating to himself the gold heart, while he generously left the torn cord in his mother's hand, who had held it fast by it.

"There mother, now it's right: now we'll drink to that long waiting. And I saw meanwhile a rifle by the sword-cutler yonder, such a splendid thing! We can unscrew that and put it in our pockets — they won't now catch me again, the green-coats!"

The first thing Thomas did, was to take his chamois-beard and black cock feather out of his pocket and stick them again in his hat; then he put on his hat in an insolent manner, and his whole appearance said: I will see who will venture it.

Just as they both were going away, Baum came in from the street. He seemed to wish to avoid them, but Zenza went up to him and thanked him again, that he had given her such a handsome present when Walpurga had been fetched away; she looked strangely at him at the same time, and Baum remarked with a side glance that Thomas too never turned his eye from him; he felt a shudder through his heart, passing zigzag like a flash of lightning from his breast to his head, making his hair stand on end, and obliging him to raise his hat and place it differently. But he drew a file out of his pocket and began to file his nails; then he said:

"You have thanked me once already. No more is needed!" He turned round and walked away.

"If Jangerl weren't in America — I could have sworn that was he," said the old woman to her son.

"Mother, you are crazed," replied Thomas.

Mother and son went together into the town, the son always walking on quickly in front; it seemed to matter little to him, if he lost his mother.

He drank a pint standing in a public house, told his mother to wait, and soon came back with the purchased rifle.

Meanwhile Walpurga sat silently at the window, thinking how they were talking at home of her great power, and especially at the inn of the chamois, how they would be talking so much of her, and the hostess, who had always looked down upon her, would be almost ill with vexation. — Walpurga laughed, she delighted in the idea of how the envious and the arrogant would be vexed at her good fortune; yes, that was almost her greatest delight, at least she dwelt

on it longest; this may have been though, because the joy of the good is quicker and sooner exhausted when one thinks of it, than the vexation and the poisonous words of the bad, which keep on fermenting and blow up rare bubbles. — So Walpurga sat at the window and her lips moved, as if she were mimicking those who envied her and were offended at her, till at last Countess Irma said:

"I can see it in you, how happy you are. Yes, Walpurga, if it were given to us to do something good every moment to a fellow creature — we should be the happiest beings under the sun. Do you see, Walpurga? This is the true divine blessing of a prince, that he can do good every minute."

"Yes, I understand that! I understand it quite," exclaimed Walpurga. "Such a king is like the sun in the heavens, which shines on all below and refreshes the trees here, and out yonder the flowers in the valley which no one sees, doing good to men and beasts and all. A king is like that — yes, he is a messenger from God. He must take care that he remains so; he may be mastered by pride and lust, because he is lord over all. Now he has given the world to Thomas, and all prison doors open, as in the story, when he says Sesame. Oh, thou good king! Do not allow thyself to be spoilt, and gather round thee ever such human hearts as that of the Countess Irma!"

"Thank you!" said Irma. "Thank you. I now know you thoroughly. Believe me, in all the books of the world there is nothing better and nothing more than stands inscribed in your heart; and if you cannot write, it is better written thus in you. — But now we will

igain be orderly quiet beings; come, now you must earn to write."

And the two sat down together, and Irma taught Walpurga how to guide her pen. Walpurga said she did not like to write single letters, a word, a single word pleased her better.

Irma set her copy, and wrote the word "Pardon." Walpurga wrote a whole sheet full of the same word, and as Irma took away the paper with her, she said:

"I shall keep this as a remembrance of this hour."

THIRD CHAPTER.

"WHAT can have happened to the Queen —"

"Her Majesty!" Mademoiselle Kramer added, half loud.

"That for several days she has scarcely seen the prince," continued Walpurga.

"His royal Highness," added Mademoiselle Kramer.

"A little while ago, she was always so up in the skies, so lifted above everything, when she saw the child and held it to her heart, and she once said to me: 'Walpurga, is it not sometimes with you, as if you were again a girl? Quite free, independent, and unmarried? The whole world is outside, here there is only I and my child?' — And now, now she looks away yonder, as if it had only been a dream that she has a child. There must be something weighty in the heart of a mother —"

"Royal" — supplied Mademoiselle Kramer.

"When she no longer has any true eyes for her own child!"

There was indeed a mighty struggle going on in the heart of the Queen. For months an increasing sensibility had taken possession of her, and there was one point, upon which she never touched in words even to herself, and all the more would any communication, any discussion with another, have appeared to her a sullying of the pure idea. She wished to make her resolve freely by herself. — And she made it. — Since she had become a mother, she had felt herself as if loosened from the world. When she thought of her child, and still more, when she had it near her heart, it was to her as if everything were thus realized, as if no one concerned her any longer, she and her child were the world and belonged to each other, they were one! — And yet the queen loved her husband from the depths of her heart, and she felt a deep impelling desire to live with him still more thoroughly, as belonging to him more, blended together into one single tone.

Thus more and more the thought strengthened in her, that there ought to be no separation in anything. The father, the mother, and the child, they are one; they pray to the same God, with the same thoughts, the same words.

Coming out from her isolation, she felt the desire to be still more one with her husband, now that she returned to the world to celebrate a new festival of union with him — and that the highest.

As the queen might speak but little, and indulged in no conversation, she ordered soon after the first few days a favourite picture — a Madonna, by Filippo Lippi the younger — to be brought into her dim and curtained apartment. She sat for hours opposite the

picture, looking at the picture, and the picture looking at her; and the two mothers lived in their blessedness with each other.

The canon who visited her, found the queen in a devoted frame of mind; and she confided to him, first of all with trembling lips, her desire to belong to the church of her husband and of her child. She begged that she might not be tormented with dogmatic teaching, and she found a willing ear. When the canon left her, a fear came over her; there went the man who took away her secret with him. He had indeed promised her to show himself worthy of her confidence, and not to divulge it to others; still it was no longer her own alone.

Her fears were soon quieted, and her face glowed with the feeling that there was yet one thing above all in which she could become one with her husband; and by which she, being now a mother, could give him full proof of her love.

From the fulness of life, there arose in her the thought of death. She ordered another picture to be placed on the easel before her couch. It was the Maria Egyptiaca by Ribera.

The queen often felt as if she must seek the glance of the penitent, but the latter was looking towards nothing; she seemed to hear with her eyes, not alarmed, as an angel called to her; but, accustomed to heavenly voices, quietly resigned, she trusts. The artist has represented the penitent princess uninjured and uncrushed by her mortifications; there lies rather on her face an expression of regained childlike innocence and youthful beauty. She kneels there naked, nothing of man's work any longer about her, veiled in her long

reddish fair hair, which falls down to her knee; she kneels before her open grave, her blue eyes look into the infinite, her lips are sorrowfully compressed, and above her hovers an angel, spreading the garment of mercy over her, and crying — "Thy sins are forgiven!" At the next moment she sinks into the grave, a reconciled and glorified spirit.

The ascetic tenor of this picture touched a chord in harmony with the queen's mind, and the ecclesiastic often found her elevated to a state of rapture.

The physician would gladly have not allowed this mute society of pictures, but neither his wish nor his express command were of any avail. For the first time the queen opposed the man, whom she nevertheless honoured so highly, with selfwill and inflexible obstinacy. When Irma saw the picture, and remarked with indifference a fault in the position of the eyes —which however had been skilfully made use of to produce a particular expression, — the queen held her hand to her heart; she was alone in her feelings, and she would remain so.

Nevertheless what the physician and Irma had failed in, was to succeed with Walpurga.

"Is that a bogie?" she asked.

"What sort of thing is that?"

"Among us at home they tell of bogies; they are spirits, and they run round the mountains in spirit nights, and can wrap themselves up in their hair."

The queen related to Walpurga the legend of the Egyptian Maria. That she was a princess who had led a dissolute life; suddenly she left the palace and all pomp and pleasure, went into the wilderness, supported herself on roots, and lived there many many

years, till all her clothes fell off her, and when her hour of death arrived, an angel from Heaven spread a garment of mercy over her.

"That is all very beautiful and good," said Walpurga; "but, Queen, I mean no offence, it seems to me a sin to have such a terrible picture always before one's eyes. I should not like to sleep in the room where such a picture is; I should fancy it would rise up in the night and come to one, and carry one away into the open grave. Oh God, I am afraid of it even in broad day."

These notions of Walpurga's had their effect; it now seemed to the queen really as if the picture would come to her in the night. She could not sleep; — in the middle of the night she was obliged to have it removed from the room.

Repose and equanimity now again returned; and when the queen was allowed to read, she received suitable books from the ecclesiastic.

She lived alone in these thoughts. Walpurga's observation was just; the queen scarcely saw her child, and yet it was for his sake and that of her husband that she wished to take this step.

A few days before her first going out, she sent for the king and said:

"Next Sunday is to be my first going out, and it is to be my first entrance into your church and that of our son. Henceforth I will pray with him and with you before the same altar."

"I don't understand you."

"I have vowed if God is gracious to me in preserving me and my child, to be one with you in everything. I am not, however, fulfilling an obligatory vow,

but a free and clear resolve. I wish to give you in this no new testimony, only a confirmation — the last seal of my love. In short, what I am and think belongs to you; we are one in the sight of the world, and we will be one in the sight of God. No one goes any longer his own particular way; no one has any longer his own particular thoughts. Our child must learn nothing of a division among men; above all, among those from whom he derives his life. I am happy to be able to offer you this, not as a sacrifice, but as a free gift."

"Matilda," said the king — and there was something strangely chilling in his tone — "are you uttering these thoughts now for the first time, or have you already made preparations" —

"I have taken my resolve seriously and alone; then only have I announced it, and all is ready. I wished to surprise you with the fact. The canon was of opinion, and he wished to insist upon it, that I should make the communication to you in his presence; but I would not do that."

"Thank God!" ejaculated the king; "then all may yet be set right again!"

"Again? — and set right?" asked the queen.

The king calmly explained that he well knew how to estimate the sacrifice, but that he would not accept it.

The queen refused to admit that it was a sacrifice, and the king said:

"Well then! You can see then even in me, how another man — and he the only one united with you — may, must regard your manner of acting otherwise to what you do yourself. How much more then the great world, the courts, our subjects."

"What do we care for the opinion of the world, if

we know that we have done right? The world! It's always the world! It cannot compel us to be otherwise than we are."

"Matilda! That is the feeling of a martyr — an elevated feeling, and worthy of reverence. Matilda, you are noble and good; but believe me, the best, aye the only correct actions are those which require no explanation and no apology. We are no anchorites. Your motives are pure, high, worthy of adoration; but the world will not understand these highest and purest motives; it will not wish to understand them. You cannot explain to the world how elevated your feelings are, and we must not explain. A prince who explains his actions, degrades himself. You look at the world with your divine feelings, but your divine feelings are not in the world. I have no wish to reveal to you the wickedness of the world, and to darken your kindly views of life; keep your faith in the most High, but keep it in the form of your confession."

"And I shall go alone all my life, and you will go with the child."

"Matilda! we are not anchorites; we are not even private people. We have an exposed position. A prince, a princess can perform no private actions."

"You think that all our actions are to set an example?"

"That too," replied the king hesitating; "that too; but I meant to say — whatever you do, it is not only you who do it, it is the queen who does it. The effects spread universally. I am happy in being so loved, believe me; you feel it, don't you, Matilda?"

"Don't talk about it; one feels the best things without speaking of them."

"Now look here; the wife of a private man can perform such an action in secret — you cannot; you would have to close the Protestant court chapel; you would wound those holding your faith in the capital, and in the whole land."

"But I will wound no one, and the world cannot desire the sacrifice from me. To be one with you, on earth and in heaven, in time and eternity, is my highest, my one aim."

"Well, then promise me one thing."

"What you will."

"Promise me that you will defer your resolve for one month at least. There are feelings which we must not make into laws for life."

"You are a noble man," said the queen; "I will obey you."

"Then you will give up your resolve?"

"No; I will wait. It shall be no resolve formed in solitude, in the seclusion of my apartments; no sickly chamber-feeling, as you imagine. I will let my resolve ripen by the sun in broad daylight. You will see that it is no mere feeling."

The king was satisfied with this result. But he kept himself strangely aloof from all manifestations of love to his consort. He left her with a friendly and yet alienating shake of the hand.

FOURTH CHAPTER.

The king had exercised great self-control in his conversation with the queen. It was now in solitude

that he felt that her communication had awakened a slumbering ill-feeling.

The king loved his wife, he loved her sincerely; but he was — he was often enough told so — an heroic nature, and he wished to be one. He could put up with nothing paltry, nothing self-tormenting and sensitive. His aim was to make his land happy and his name historical. In a period of quiet progress and of peaceful labour for the common good among all belonging to the state, there was no opportunity for heroic deeds — there was nothing surprisingly new to be done; what had been achieved had to be maintained, what was in progress had to be brought to free development; and in this much labour of many men was silently absorbed. Hence the king liked building. The founding of great buildings for art and science, for the church and the army, presented itself as the visible result of a will striving after great things.

The king loved his wife. That was something for which there was nothing to be done — it lived on quietly; but the queen was ever wishing to create something new, to have proof positive; it is true her deep fervour was not to be mistaken, and she proved it now again in this resolve — good in itself, but exaggerated and impossible of execution. The queen idealized everything, making herself thus the ideal contrast to the heroic, and it rose before him like an emblem of this fact, that she had constant twilight in her rooms, while he loved the full light; he had always to find his way in this half-light, and when he came out the broad daylight was new to him. This worrying with religious questions which could not be solved, this continual agitation of the mind, it hindered all

resolute action. If one was to be stedfast in life, and especially as king to govern the comprehensive and much ramified deeds of men, one must have no private investigations — the life of the soul must be subordinate.

The queen wishes to be mother and wife in the highest sense, he thought, but she must also be a queen. There must be none of this everlasting trifling, of this daily weaving of garlands, however full of feeling they may be. And this love is so *exigeante;* it will be satisfied, it will be requited, it will always be rewarded by constant expressions of mutual love. It has something too about it exclusive and troublesome. The sun shines, the love is there — what is the good of this everlasting labour?

Whilst the queen in her isolation had brought herself to an increased amount of sensibility, and wished to accomplish a corresponding deed, an isolation of another kind had been preparing in the king, and this attempt at a change of religion — it shall on no account be more than an attempt, said the king to himself — had completed this isolation.

The king sat silently in his cabinet. He drew his hand across his brow as the thought passed through his head — how it would be, if a great-minded commanding wife were at his side. He did not wish to think it, he had not thought it. He ordered that the physician should come to him. The matter must be quickly despatched.

The physician entered.

The king at first inquired cautiously whether this confidant of the queen knew anything of the occurrence; he then communicated to him all that had passed, naturally enjoining the strictest secrecy.

The king was startled when the physician very politely, but very decidedly, instead of showing gratitude for the confidence, declined it altogether.

"I would prefer, your Majesty, if secrets or troubles in which I can do nothing, were graciously withheld from me."

The king looked astonished. This man was always so inflexible, and always preserved his dignity.

"I wished just to ask you," said the king — and his tone was bitter — "whether you would trust yourself to have an influence over the queen in this matter."

"I should not; but if your Majesty trusts to me, I am ready to make the attempt."

"Do so then."

"Her Majesty the Queen will however feel wounded by it; I know her peculiarity of feeling — the matter will lose for her all the sweetness of sacredness if it is discussed here and there."

"That would be well! That would be judicious!" said the king quickly. "This enthusiasm will perhaps be best cured in this way, and in our time everything is discussed. Your friends in the chamber of deputies will discuss everything — and this may also" —

The mixed feeling of the king towards the physician always came to light in unguarded moments. It was a constant disadvantage that the physician never pressed himself forward; but whenever he was drawn into a discussion, he always with equal decision, professed an unbiassed manner of thinking both in religious and political things. Nevertheless he was not to be dispensed with. Inconvenient as his manner often was, he was highly esteemed by the king; and he stood so high in science,

and in the regard of the country, that it cast an especial lustre upon the court, that a man of acknowledged freedom of mind should be among those in close intercourse with the king.

The king therefore gave the physician a formal charge to influence the queen, and induce her to draw back from her resolve.

The mission was difficult.

The queen had always hitherto confided everything to the tried friend — now he came with her secret, which another had committed to him.

Gunther tried to manage that the queen should communicate to him her secret resolve; but she was not to be induced to do this, and at last he was obliged to begin and speak of it himself. The queen was confounded.

"Why did the king do that?" said she, and a deeply painful expression passed over her face.

"His Majesty," replied the physician, "perhaps trusts that I may have some more decisive arguments to bring forward based upon reason.

"I know all the arguments," replied the queen impetuously. "This is something, which no strange word, no strange breath —"

"Then I will be silent, your Majesty, and I beg to take my leave."

"No, no, speak. I must hear you."

"You must not —"

"Oh! will — must! You always say, we, humans, have no free wills! It is certainly so with princes!"

"Your Majesty," gently began the physician, "the high resolve which you have taken, is also not an act of your will; it is the natural and necessary con-

sequence of a chain of events and impressions, which have fashioned the disposition of your mind. Fervent natures always think they can never do enough for themselves and for the world; they would like to be causing happiness and to be fortifying some noble thought in the world at every moment and at every breath."

"So you too can flatter?"

"I never flatter; I only analyse the matter, and it is not at all flattering. This over abundance of feeling is not health."

"Then you think my state of mind sickly —"

"We do not call it so — but your Majesty, I beg you, this tone is not with either of us ...."

"Speak on. I will hear gladly. It does not offend me that you know of it. I look upon you as the daylight, by which I may allow my resolution to ripen."

"Well then, whatever is to ripen, must also be moved hither and thither by currents of air, aye by storm itself. I will call forth no storm, I will not speak of the fact, that whoever leaves his hereditary religion, does an offence to father and mother, and that the ceremonies to which we are accustomed from our youth are the mother tongue of the soul. All this does not concern the mind. Mind and reason are the father and mother of the conscious man. Whatever we thus apprehend, we must also confess. I do not condemn the change on the grounds of judgment. As far, however, as I know, you embrace the confession only outwardly — or rather inwardly also, though not for the sake of the confession, but from love to your husband. I myself, your Majesty, as you know, stand on quite another ground. I believe that I know that river in

Paradise, there where it is still one, and only outside is it divided into streams, which as my friend Eberhardt, our countess Irma's father, says, set the sermon mills in motion. Your Majesty knows, that the same legend which is to be found in the most beautiful of all books, the Bible, is also to be found in our German legends, four streams flow out of the tree Igdrasil —"

"Yes, but pray, dear friend, no learned curiosities now."

"Your Majesty," resumed the physician again, "if we persevere in our hereditary religion, we can be free in it, that is, in our thoughts we can rise above it; no inquisition has any more power over us. But if we confess a new religion, we have no longer any right to be free; it is our duty then to confess it! a born noble can profess citizen equality; a man who becomes noble cannot do so. And your Majesty, let me say one thing more: I consider it a happiness for mankind and for our German fatherland especially, that there is no unity of confession; by this alone is humanity preserved, for we must learn that there are different forms and languages of the soul for one and the same thing. In the multiplicity of confessions there lies a security against fanaticism, as well as a confirmation that one may be indifferent to the outward forms of religion, I mean that one may be an honest man in any religion, and even without any outward religion."

The physician sat long with the queen, explaining these thoughts still more closely.

While he was still with her, the canon was announced.

The queen excused herself, and appointed him to come another day.

Still, when the physician left, she had not been alienated from her purpose. She adhered to it that this was a matter in which no other human being could interfere, and especially not a man.

She was on the point of confiding to Irma; she was wise and true to her. But an irresistible shyness held her back she would not appear weak and wavering to Irma.

FIFTH CHAPTER.

THE queen was for days silent and alone. Only Walpurga with the child might be with her, she would speak to no one else, not her husband, nor the physician, nor the ecclesiastic.

One afternoon, when Walpurga was with her, she forced herself to say:

"Walpurga, do you know that I do not belong to your religion?"

"Yes, indeed, and I am so glad."

"You are glad?"

"Yes, I am glad. You are the first and only Lutheran whom I have ever known till now, and if all are like you, it must be a beautiful religion."

"It is beautiful; all religions are beautiful which make us good people."

"Look here, queen, my father said that, just with the same words. Oh! how I wish he had lived so long, that he might have spoken with you."

The Queen was silent for some time.

At last she asked again:

"Walpurga, if you had a different religion to your Hausei, would you go with him to his church?"

"My Hansei is catholic too."

"But if it were otherwise?"

"But it is not otherwise."

"But imagine it were otherwise."

"I can't do that, I really can't," said she almost crying. The queen was again silent. After a time Walpurga began of herself:

"I can though, yes I can; I have imagined it. You are lutheran and your husband is catholic. Yes I can. Now, why did you ask me then?"

"If you — imagine yourself in my place — if you were protestant, would you not go to your husband's church?"

"No, queen, never. If I had been his honest wife as a protestant, I would remain so. May I tell you something, Queen?"

"Yes, tell me."

"What was it then I wanted to tell you? Yes, now I know. Look here — my dear father — the physician has certainly told you about him, what a good man he was — but I am beginning at the wrong end, I intended to start differently. Well, then, see here: In my learning I had a very severe clergyman, who condemned all men who were not of his faith to the deepest hell, and when I one day told my father this, he said to me; Purgei, — he only called me Purgei, when he wanted to make me lay something to heart — Purgei, says he, there are such millions of men on earth, and the smallest part of them are Christians, and what a vile God that would be, who would condemn all the rest to hell because they were not

Christians, and they could do nothing to help it, because they had not been born so! Don't think, my father used to say, that a man is condemned on account of his creed, if he is good and honest. And I hold fast to that. Of course I said nothing to our clergyman about it, he needn't know everything! he doesn't tell me everything that he knows." The queen was silent, and Walpurga presently began again. "Now something else occurs to me, the best part occurs to me! Oh dear Queen, I must tell this to you too, I have it also from my father; he used to think a great deal. The old doctor, the father of the present one, often said that if my father had studied, he would have been a great man, a famous man. Well then, it was one evening, it was on the Sunday that I had been confirmed, I was sitting with my father and mother on the seat behind our little house on the lake, and the evening bell rang, and we prayed our ave and sat down again, and then we heard the choristers, coming in a boat across the lake, and they sang so beautifully, so beautifully I can't tell you, and then my father said, standing up again, and the sun shining in his face, and it was like pure fire, he said: 'Now I know how it must feel with our Lord God up in Heaven yonder.' 'Don't talk so profanely,' says my mother. 'I am not talking at all profanely, on the contrary,' says my father, sitting down again; he had a wonderful voice, like no one's else. — 'Yes, I know it, I feel it now,' says he, 'all the churches, ours, and the Protestant and the Jewish, and the Turkish, and as they are all called — each has thus its voice in the song, and each sings according to his power, and all harmonize together and give a good chorus, and up yonder in heaven, it must

sound beautiful, and each has only to sing as our Lord God has given him a voice, He knows how it will harmonize, and it does harmonize of course beautifully!' "

Walpurga fixed her beaming eyes on the queen, and the queen's glance met hers.

"Your father spoke good words to you," said the queen. Something in the queen's eye glistened and in Walpurga's also.

Walpurga went away with the child.

On the next day, the queen requested her husband to come to her. She said to him:

"I have courage."

"I know that."

"No, I have a courage which you don't know —"

"A courage which I don't know?"

— "And never will know! I have the courage to appear weak and wavering. You don't misunderstand me, do you?"

"Speak plainer and without preliminaries."

"I have resolved," continued the queen, "I scarcely venture now to utter the word resolved — you don't misunderstand me, do you? I will remain in the confession in which I was born, and we will yet be one."

The king thanked her very heartily, and only regretted that the canon knew of the matter: he hoped however to stop his tongue.

The queen looked at him with astonishment, for he seemed so little delighted; but then again she considered it natural; why should anything, which had only passed over like a cloud, leave a great effect behind? The struggle in her had indeed been great, but not in others.

The queen felt that it would be long before any decision or resolve of hers would obtain weight and authority; for she had once been weak, and people do not forget that.

When the queen was in the protestant court chapel on Sunday, she scarcely ventured to raise her eyes from the royal pew.

The thought passed through her mind, how it would have been if she were in the other church, and how the eyes of the congregation would have been directed to her place here, where no one was to appear again. In spirit she had already wholly left this church, this congregation; her soul trembled at what she had wished to accomplish, and from the depths of her heart, she thanked her husband, who had held her back from it with such a strong hand.

When the whole congregation rose, and in the church prayer for the royal house, she was especially remembered, and she was "churched" as the term is, in gratitude for her preservation and for the preservation of the royal prince, her tears flowed unrestrained.

At noon she went a second time to church, contrary to all former habit.

Meanwhile the king promenaded up and down with Countess Irma in a part of the park, shut off by a red line from the public.

The king communicated to Irma the queen's resolve, and how she had been dissuaded from it. Irma replied, that she had long foreboded this project, but had not considered herself justified in speaking of it; she had hinted at it to the physician, but he had wished to know nothing of it.

The king expressed his dislike of the physician's

character, but Irma defended him with much enthusiasm.

"The man is fortunate," said the king, "in having such an eloquent advocate in his absence."

"My friends have always that in me," replied Irma; "those whom I truly honour."

"I should like some day to be accused," continued the king.

"And I think," replied Irma smiling, "your Majesty could not wish to be better defended than I would do it."

There was a pause. The king, with perfect candour, retracted his opposition to the physician; and the conversation upon him only seemed like a bridge to another topic.

The king spoke of his consort, and of her peculiar tone of mind.

The king and Irma spoke of the queen for the first time.

That Irma did so, and that the king not only allowed it, but really challenged it, was the germ of an incalculable catastrophe.

They praised and extolled the poetic mind, the lofty feeling, the flowery tenderness of the queen; and while they both represented her so brightly, they silently in their hearts blamed her weakness and superabundant enthusiasm.

In the first utterance of a husband regarding his wife to a third person, there lies a fatal estrangement and separation.

At present all was veiled with pure praise, and was covered over with enthusiasm. It was here just as it was with the queen in the church. Her voice rang in

prayer, with all the power of her will she wished to sink her whole soul in the words, to be again abundantly what she had been before; and yet, while she spoke the words, and her thoughts penetrated them, there was secretly an estrangement and coldness which never gave way, and which was whispering to her — thou wilt never quite return.

While the king and Irma talked together, they appeared to each other as equals; they saw the world and the emotions of the human soul with the same eye, they talked of how easily one may fall into weakness, and their confidence never appeared to them as weakness, but as strength.

They kept up the same pace, and Irma said no longer — we will turn back.

The queen, since she had again joined in society, was, if possible, still more gracious, more loving towards all; she regarded everyone as far above herself; others were not so weak and wavering as she had been. She felt herself impelled to do something good for everyone, because she longed to stand on equal ground with others, or above them. Her innermost soul was full of humility.

A few days afterwards the papers contained a strangely mysterious history of how the angelic goodness of a princess had been taken advantage of secretly to alienate her from herself, and to withdraw from her the love of the country.

It was not difficult to discover that the change in the queen's religion was here alluded to.

The queen had always acknowledged herself on the side of the liberal politics of the country; and the king regarded the physician as the mediator who had

procured her the favour of the press, and had in so doing not avoided an act of indiscretion. This public misrepresentation irritated him still more against the press, and no less so against the machinations of the queen's party at the court; nevertheless he dissembled both feelings of vexation. The time would come when both would be legitimate.

SIXTH CHAPTER.

(Irma to her friend Emmy.)

. . . . All this I accomplished yesterday. I wished to read; I saw the letters, but I did not read them — all ran up together in confusion, like an ant-heap. I wished to sing, but no song was right. I wished to play, but even Beethoven was strange to me. And so I lay for hours, and dreamt within myself and far beyond me. I followed the mother and her son over the mountains, the larks sang my thoughts to them; they came back, and the wild daring boy was tractable; he sang freshly in the free world, and greeted the treasure of his heart — I could fancy I heard him still. Oh Emmy, what is there more glorious than to make men happy? It is miserable enough to be a human being, fettered by a thousand barriers, considerations, miseries; and when in addition to this, one has to suffer trouble — punishment, prison, chains! It is a shame to humanity that there are houses of correction!

Oh Emmy, and how grandly did that simple wife of the woodcutter speak; it was like a revelation from the heart of the people. I wanted to put her words

into verse, to give them to the king in the morning, but I couldn't do it. Nothing satified me; language is worn out; it is too narrow, too clumsy. Schiller's words were always passing through my mind, "Ah, when the soul speaks, the soul is really speaking no longer!" I left my scribbling alone. I have passed a restless night. When anything deep within is unreleased, the soul wanders about like a ghost, and can find no rest in sleep.

To-day at breakfast I told the king Walpurga's words. I was vexed that he only half understood them, or he would not have answered in this manner: "Yes, the mountain people have a deeply monarchical feeling. Tell that to your father."

The king observed that he had expressed himself unsuitably; and ever adroit and amiable as he is, quickly recovering his good nature again, he said, "Dear Countess, I will give you a secret title, but it is only to be between us two. I appoint you henceforth the spy of the people's heart. Search and listen, and whatever you find, you shall always meet with unqualified compliance from me. Do you not think that Egeria was nothing else but the spy of the people's heart? She heard by the altar in the temple the most secret thoughts of the people, she communicated them to king Numa, and he was deified into adoration."

"But our people only utter prescribed prayers," said she.

"That is a suggestive thought," replied the king; and he soon after commissioned Schnabelsdorf, who came in, to note briefly for him what fixed prayers the Greeks and Romans used in their different temples.

And thus the whole matter — all that, as I im-

agined, was to have a deep effect — became only an evening amusement.

Oh, dear Emmy, amusement! That is the deepest point on earth, into which everything flows. An apostle appearing at the present day, would have to say — Ask not how we shall amuse ourselves to-day, but &c. You must complete the sentence.

I am not better than others. I am also only a puppet wound up for seventy years, dancing, laughing, riding, and amusing itself. All the world are mere singing-birds. The difference is only this; that some singing-birds are contented with grain and caterpillars, flies and larvæ; while others require larger food — hares, roe, stags, pheasants, fish; and the higher species of singing-birds, yclept man, consists in this, that he cooks his prey. There is a terrible emptiness in many men. To make conversation — this is the whole art. Think distinctly over the expression, "to make conversation," and you will find what nonsense it is. People find me entertaining, but I never make conversation; I just speak when I have anything to say. My bad angel is now always calling out to me, dilettanteism. A "dilettante" — one who seeks enjoyment for pastime — so my dictionary translates it. It is clumsy, but there is something in it. . . .

One day later.

The king has just sent me the following poem. I must crave pardon. He has after all understood my communication. How do you like the poem? Why should not a king write poems? We demand ideality from him. It is true, a king ought to understand everything; but to be a dilettante in nothing.

(Postscript.) I have just perceived that I may not copy the poem for you.

One day later.

Do not laugh that I am always telling you of Walpurga. The king found me with her to-day, just as we were having our writing-lesson. He said how much it had pleased him to be able to pardon Walpurga's relative.

"Our relationship is distant, a sort of seventh cousinship," she replied. "And, King, I have something on my heart. I am innocent if the red Thomas is bad again; I can't help it."

The king laughed, and said, "I cannot help it either."

It is inconceivable how Walpurga now almost always speaks with anger of Zenza and her son, and will have nothing to do with them. Strange demons dwell together in the hearts of the people. I am afraid my office as the people's spy will be too hard for me.

The king has had a copy sent to me of the church prayers of the Greeks and Romans.

I will write it down, and then it will haunt me no longer.

I am always imagining how it would be, if Zenza had been mistress of the chamber; and her son, the poacher, grand-master of the huntsmen! She would have been ready enough of speech, and she has extremely wise and cunning eyes; and the lad would have been a very elegant cavalier.

Ah, and then men say that there is equality in the world, and that we must presume nothing upon our

birth. Is it not a visible token of Divine favour, that I was born a countess, and not a daughter of Zenza's? And yet we can say, on the other hand, just the contrary.

At bottom, the lot of all creatures on earth is good. The frog in the swamp is just as happy in his croaking, as the nightingale is with his singing and warbling in the hedge. It is not humanity, it is arbitrariness and tyranny to say to the frog — you shall also live in a rosebush and sing à la nightingale!

Have you ever really heard how comfortably a frog croaks? They are just now having a great concert in the palace pond. I like to hear it. We human beings are too impudent in measuring everything as we relish it, and as it refreshes our ear and eye. Mrs. Frog likes Mr. Frog's song the best of course; and she is right.

Thank you, dear Emmy, that you let me write everything to you in this way. You cannot imagine what good it does me.

I am a spy over my own heart. There are many wild fellows in it, adventurers and fortune-hunters, and besides them there is a nun. . . . I am myself curious how the mixed company will get on together.

I am so free, so insolent towards the whole court, because I have a secret daily task — and this is my letters to you.

But a thousand times oftener I am thinking of you.

> There's not an hour in the silent night,
> But my thoughts to thee take their willing flight,
> And remember thee . . . . . .

Do you know it? That was your favourite song.

I sing it daily at least once. You and my piano are everything to me! You wait till I come. You have all the tones of all the masters in you, of all that were, and are still to be; and you only wait for one to come who can make them sound.

I am two souls. I am my piano and my zitter. The one soul allows itself to be easily carried away, the other not; and the one requires the touching of the strings with the fingers — ah! I scarcely know what I am writing. I wish I could leave off thinking. I wish I were the daughter of this Zenza, and my brother were the poacher. Yet no! Our thieves and rogues, who have learned by heart at school the seven deadly sins and the catechism, are curbed and dastardly; they thrust a petition for pardon into their mother's apron, and cry — We have done nothing, let it be cancelled! Nowhere in the world is there a greater scorn of nature. I think your Italian "Robber behind the rocks," whom you once embroidered, is nothing but a painted tradition for embroidery. The arts themselves help to gloss over our existence.

Good-night.

The following day.

. . . . . I never read over what I have written. I wish to know nothing more of it. The sun, which shone yesterday, shines no longer to-day. I mean it differently; it is the same sun, but the light is ever new, and I am happy to-day and care not to inquire, whether there are churches and palaces, men and women, frogs and crocodiles in the world.

The king said to me to-day:

"I know, Countess, that you have thought contemptibly of me the last few days. I feel every aliena-

tion of your soul like an electric shock. I beg you, don't do so any more" — and as he said this, he looked at me like a beseeching child, ah, he has such true, deep eyes.

I know what you once said: "there are glances without a back-ground, without any depth of soul. I will know no longer of bounds, I — I . . . . No, I cannot write the word. Oh Emmy, I wish I were a peasant on a solitary mountain height. It seemed to-night, as if my native mountains called to me: come home! come! It is good with us! — Oh! I would fain go away and I cannot.

Walpurga is my comfort now. I absorb myself in her life, there is so much thorough natural repose in it, and at the same time, it is extremely amusing to me to look at the whole court life through her eyes, as if it were a puppet show. We sit like children before the camera obscura, and are thoroughly merry.

We sing too a good deal together. I have learnt splendid songs from her. Oh! how delightfully fearless are the people who live out yonder!

"There is no sin on Alma's heights." — That song is always haunting me.

The king starts to-day for the baths. My brother is in his suite. The king has asked me to write to him now and then, and I shall do so.

Two days later.

The king knows I cannot live without flowers in my room; he has now ordered that every day a fresh bouquet should be placed in my room. It gives me no pleasure. A flower, for which one stoops and which

one gives to a friend, is more than a thousand ingeniously arranged bouquets from the public garden.

The king also has ordered flowers to be placed daily in the apartments of the Baroness N... and the Countess A... I imagine it is only done to cover the favour shown to me. It may be. I am angry with the king. He shall not have a line from me.

I have been learning modelling for some time of a Professor of the Academy. He has prepared a bust of me, and used it as a model for a figure of Victory which is to be placed in the new arsenal. Have I not reason to be proud?

I shall remain in future always in the open air, and shall see nothing but the blue sky, the sun, moon and stars, and at noon the parade of the soldiers on guard. —

The Professor says, I have talent for moulding figures. This makes me very happy: painting and drawing are only half, only a makeshift. Will you allow me to make a relievo of you, when I come to you?

Have I not written to you once of a secret with regard to the queen?

I think I have.

The matter is now at an end. The queen, out of love to her husband, wished to come over to our church, or rather to yours. — You must once for all pardon it, I have none. The king behaved nobly in the matter. It was an hour never to be forgotten, when he confided all to me. He is a truly great nature, and it is beautiful that there are princes on earth, men, grown up to the original type, unspoilt, untwisted, self-conscious, unbiassed, free, and universal. If there were no kings, we should no longer know, what a free, beautiful,

complete human being was — I mean beautiful in the highest sense. It is true, a high order of mind is also requisite. They are not all gods, who allow themselves to be worshipped.

The poet and the king, they alone are perfect men. All others, even artists and scholars, have a divided, limited, small vocation, a solo-instrument to play — all musicians, painters, sculptors, architects, professors. The poet and the king alone embrace the whole life in all its forms, nothing is unimportant to them, because they rule over everything, everything belongs to them. The poet creates an entire world, the king is an entire world. The poet knows and depicts the shepherd and the huntsman, the king and the statesman, the queen and the waiting maid and the seamstress and all. The king however is all of these, huntsman and statesman, soldier and husbandman, scholar and artist, he is the whole orchestra of capabilities; thus he is king, thus he represents a people, an age, the highest humanity.

Oh Emmy! Call me Turandot. Schöning, the poetical gentleman of the bedchamber, is paying his addresses to me.

But do you know what I ought to have been in the world?

I will tell you.

The Queen of a wild race. I was made for that. To found an entirely new system of civilization — that was my vocation. Don't laugh, I am not joking — no — I feel too much for that! I am not modest, — I like to criticise others, and myself too. I know what I am worth and what I am not worth.

On my father's estate, there is a hammock between

two elms. That used to be my favourite spot, lying there, hovering in the air and dreaming of far-off worlds.

Do you know of no wild race, which will choose me as its queen? —— I have procured some of the Indian melodies, if one may call them such. A Professor at the University, who lived for six years among the Indians, gave a lecture a short time ago before the court. He had the instruments played, which he had brought with him; it was more noise than music. Such is the inarticulate utterance of the art of a whole people.

Morning 4 o'clock.

Forget everything I wrote, just as you would the variations in the weather or in the air yesterday.

I have got up to write to you. I cannot sleep. I sit here, scarcely dressed, to talk with you. Oh that I could only do so! Writing is miserable, it is a helpless thing!

I don't know what is the matter with me. All that I am and that I do, seems to me only provisional. I am waiting for something, I do not know what. I fancy it will be coming the next minute, that I shall be doing some wonder, that some wonder will happen to me, that I shall become something utterly different, a great sanative power, no longer a little empty child of man. I listen, I fancy I must hear a sound, not belonging to earth.

It won't do, I cannot write. I fancied it would have helped me, if I could have compelled myself to think, and to speak over everything definitely; but I know nothing definite, I only know I am unhappy; not

unhappy, but as if apparently dead, apparently living. I could imagine I were a sleepwalker.

I can do no more. I will close this letter, I will lie down again in bed, I will sleep. The whole world is sleeping round me. I wish I could dream myself away into another life, and were never to wake again.

Good night! good morning!

IRMA.

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"I AM going to bring you to-morrow the daughter of my old friend, the Countess Wildenort, of whom I have often spoken to you," said the physician one evening to his wife.

"The countess's appearance and voice are full of majesty, but she does not sing practically."

"Then you will teach her; she would gladly learn of you."

"If she will, I am ready."

The physician was glad that this intercourse should come about so easily and naturally; he knew indeed that his wife complied with all his wishes, but in this instance double caution was necessary to ensure success.

For some time he had observed a feverish excitement in Irma's nature, and it had increased during the last few days; but he was a physician also with regard to the mind, not awaiting the outbreak of illness, but, as far as possible, obviating it by a suitable habit of life. He knew not the ground of Irma's excitement; he fancied that an insight, aye, perhaps an initiation into genuine domestic life, might lead Irma's nature

— inclined as she was to trifle with extremes — into a more quiet track. He was experienced enough to know that sympathy and friendship can interpose but little; but acquaintance with one of the middle class, ripe in character and culture, could not fail to have an effect on Irma. She had hitherto only known the life of the cloister and of the court.

Gunther had no occasion to give his wife direct advice, or even any intimation how she should endeavour to obtain influence over Irma; he was as sure of the nature and influence of his wife as if she were a power of nature; the more freely he allowed her to exercise her own power, the more certain was he of the result.

Gunther generally kept his domestic life strictly separate from all relation with the court. In this case, however, it was the daughter of his friend, though of his angry friend; to her he threw open the fortifications of his castle.

Irma had weeks before only casually mentioned her meeting with the physician's wife and youngest daughter, at the Te Deum on the birth of the crown-prince. The physician had alluded to it again as if by chance; and Irma, almost without knowing it, had expressed the wish to extend her slight acquaintance. This was just what he had desired, and on this day he introduced Irma to his home. It was a fine well-furnished house.

Mrs. Gunther, the wife of the Privy Counsellor, was by birth a Swiss: and had belonged to a wealthy and cultivated family of the middle classes. She still spoke the high German with a strong Alemannic* accent; she compelled herself neither to adhere to the

* That is, that belonging to the Alemanni or ancient Germans, and to their country known in ancient history as Alemannia.

dialect, nor to adopt the choice language of books; her whole nature was just as naturally free as if it had been from education; but neither about education nor naturalness was there much fuss made. It was a matter of course that one was busy at home; that the things of life were criticised according to one's own feeling and taste, and interest taken in all that was beautiful and generally useful.

The privy counsellor's lady had formerly been a favourite singer in social circles, and especially in great singing performances; her voice was a full rich soprano, and although she now no longer sang solos, she took part with her daughters in great musical performances; and as younger voices had undertaken the solos, she took part in the choruses with a good grace.

And just thus was her life. Independent and active at home, but taking an interest in all the public matters open to women. She had for her life a good patrimony; she had inherited with it, no nervous whims, and public spiritedness was a duty with her.

She brought up her children, she regulated her house, she was a kindly attentive hostess to her guests; and she was all this as if in obedience to the instincts of her nature.

She honoured her husband; his opinion had always a special weight with her, but she also held firm to her own judgment.

She had now been nearly twenty years in the capital, but the whole frippery of rank and class, and the patronage of the great was utterly foreign to her; she stood in no opposition to it all, she left it for those to whom it was of importance; but to herself such matters were, and remained, perfectly indifferent.

That her husband was held in such honour was pleasant to her, but it seemed to her a matter of course; he was indeed a man of high consideration, and even if the world had failed to recognise this, he would still have remained to her the first and the worthiest. She expressed this by all her actions. She had never had a remote desire to come to court, and the fact of her husband being so often absent by day and night, and even for weeks at a time, she accepted as a necessity of his calling, and did not render this necessity more difficult to him by complaints and wishes.

When the physician returned, he was always welcomed into a well-arranged and simple home; and, strengthened by this, he passed as it were from the secure ground of domestic life, out again upon the smooth and insecure path of court existence.

It was to this house that Irma was now introduced. Her appearance was full of splendour and beauty, and no one would have guessed how utterly poor and homeless were her innermost feelings.

She held in her hand the beautiful bouquet which the king had on this day, as on all others, ordered to be placed in her room. Gunther had told her that it was his daughter Paula's birthday, and she had brought her these flowers; they were as beautiful, as well arranged as the bearer of them; and yet what feeling was connected with them? It was almost a sin to use them as a salutation, for Irma felt herself injured by these flowers; but they too were coins, and they may be passed further.

When Irma entered the house, it seemed to her as if she were coming out of the crowded market-place

or out of the disquietude and noise of the streets into a temple of simple domestic life.

The house, which was in a small narrow street, was surrounded by a garden full of beautiful tall trees. A small enclosure of the court-yard was arranged as an aviary. The entrance-hall and apartments were adorned with pictures and statuettes, the furniture was simple and solid; the upper étage contained the library, the reception-room, and study of the physician.

No preparations had been made for Irma's reception; the mother had even expressly told her daughters, that they should make no change in their dress on account of the countess's visit. They did not go to meet Irma, she was conducted through the summer-house, where the flowers and presents for Paula were arranged, and there on the steps sat Frau Gunther with her daughters busily engaged on some white work; the elder daughter, the wife of Professor Korn, was there with her child, and the younger, Paula, who was now, like Irma, entering her one-and-twentieth year, looked fresh and merry — not exactly beautiful, but bright and well formed.

Irma was kindly welcomed. Gunther soon retired, as it was his hour for consultation, and left Irma alone with the ladies. At first it surprised her that she was repeatedly accosted as the daughter of an old friend; she did not appear here, or at least not especially, in her own worth, or even as the favourite maid of honour; she was the daughter of Count Eberhard, who was received into the house from a feeling of obligation. When they asked after her father's health, she thanked them; her heart was heavy, that she herself

knew so little of it. How utterly different was it with the children here!

Music soon presented an agreeable change. There lay on the piano a manuscript composition by a nephew of Frau Gunther's, residing in North Germany. Frau Gunther told her that the young man was a philologist by profession, but as he was probably losing his eyesight, and possessed decided musical talent, he was now perfecting himself as a musician.

Irma begged Frau Gunther to sing the song, but the latter replied that her voice was no longer full enough, but that it was just as if it were written for the countess's voice. She gave her the sheet, Irma read it through, the hostess sat down to the piano to accompany her, and Irma sang with a rich voice. The composition was graceful, but it unmistakeably recalled to mind passages from well-known masters.

Frau Gunther now showed what she had yesterday designated to her husband as practical singing. Irma did not sing to the full compass of her voice, nor did she sustain her notes sufficiently, and she exhibited her imperfections too plainly. The lady gave her instructions in a simple manner, perfectly removed from all pretentiousness, and Irma considered the daughters happy who could thus hear their mother sing.

"And here is my son, my most grateful public," said the lady, introducing a handsome young man with a thick brown beard. The young man, who was technical director in a chemical manufactory, had brought a student with him; friends from the neighbourhood came besides, and there was a cheerful party on the terrace and in the garden.

Irma observed the attentive glances directed to her.

It seemed to her as if people must know the confusion that dwelt within her; she completely forgot how beautiful she was.

"Pardon me, Frau Gunther, for looking at you so," said Irma suddenly; "but I dabble a little in the arts, and when I see the form, and cut, and colour of your head, it seems to me as if the picture of the Holbein Madonna in the Dresden Gallery were alive before me."

"You still remark that?" replied the lady, slightly blushing. "Formerly it was often remarked; and it was, moreover, almost the first thing which my husband said to me in Zürich, now nearly six-and-twenty years ago. On my mother's side, I am certainly descended from the family of the Burgomaster Maier, with whom the painting originated."

Irma was delighted with these observations and reminiscences. She kept looking earnestly at Frau Gunther, and while she spoke of her own artistic efforts, and only wished that she could model a likeness — Frau Gunther must sit to her, she said, — the thought passed through her soul, how an old inherited culture, something utterly different to that of the nobles, flows through all ages, producing the best of human creations — not nobility, but free citizenship.

Frau Gunther asked Irma if she possessed any picture of her mother.

She replied in the negative.

Irma told her that her father had had a portrait painted of her mother, in the most beautiful period of her life. The picture had been a failure — it almost represented a stranger — and her father had had the portrait destroyed; he would rather at the time have had no picture of her mother, than a false one.

"I honour the man for the sake of this one act of truth," said Frau Gunther. "Most people satisfy themselves with the false, and say this and that is still to be recognised; and at last they gradually persuade themselves that it must once have been true."

The conversation now turned upon the fact that Irma had never known her mother. Irma's eye glanced often at the two daughters, who could sit so near their mother.

Frau Gunther said:

"I hope I do not excite you painfully by this remembrance, but I regard it as a duty that we should often quietly think of our dead; I do so with regard to my own dear mother, and I wish my children some day to do the same with me."

Irma took the lady's hand and pressed it. In all that she said there was something sterling and satisfying.

Frau Gunther told her how for a long time she had had no taste for the plastic arts, and could not impute any to herself; but by degrees an understanding had dawned upon her, but that she had it far more for all that regarded the human figure than for landscape. The conversation continued in a free and easy flow. The half-hour which Irma had purposed staying — the carriage had been long announced — was prolonged to more than double. At length she took her leave, laden with sincere requests to come again.

EIGHTH CHAPTER.

With a feeling as if she were coming from another world, from another life — far, far removed from her own — Irma returned to the palace.

The physician was one who examined and was well acquainted with human hearts.

Irma's visit to his house had in one respect the exact result which he had imagined, but with this result was mingled something else — or it was combined rather with existing circumstances which he could not estimate. It is only the drop which falls from the clouds which is free from intermixture, and it is only the pure thought which can be exactly perceived in its consequences. The water in the spring, and the living human heart — there are invisible mixtures in both of them, and it cannot be estimated what effect a new ingredient may have on the unseen atoms dissolved there.

Deep was the excitement in Irma's soul. Her superior power had sought some exercise, some act, in which to exhaust itself. The friendship of the king, and the fact that she could afford his noble nature something which otherwise it lacked, namely the good fellowship — all this had appeared to her as a happiness. But the daily courtesy of the nosegay, small as it was, had aroused and offended her.

"He is not thy ideal," said Irma to herself; and she was as profoundly solitary as she had been ever since she could think.

She had been solitary in the Convent, but there she

had found her friend, who, if she gave but little, received all from her in truth. She was solitary at the court, in spite of her haughty caprice, she must always be doing something, always attempting something, playing, singing, painting, modelling; anything but this deathlike solitude. There was a deep home-sickness in her heart.

Are not all men homeless on earth? she asked herself. While the question was yet in her mind she had been taken by the physician to his house.

How beautiful, how voidless, was every thing there. There was a home, there was a mother, who said how she understood young ardent life; those daughters could never suffer as she had done. The eye of the mother wandered to her and said: I will understand you, I will mitigate every sorrow which you unburden to me; but Irma could not unburden, she could not call out, help me! and especially not now when she had nothing to give and where no one stood in need of her. She could and she would help herself, and that alone.

Frau Gunther had appealed to the deepest feeling within her: her remembrance of a mother, who was now no more. — But Irma glided away from the subject with a few light words, and the pain grew within her all the more strongly.

She wept; she knew it not till a tear fell on her bosom.

There is so much peace, so much true realization of seclusion, in that world which is sufficient of itself, and needs no favour from without in its composition and formation. How happy must a girl be in such a family, until she herself becomes the head of a family.

Irma felt herself humbled, all her arrogance had

passed away. She was still in the garden where people were moving about easily and freely, the men coming from their professional, the girls from their domestic duties, and all satisfied with themselves.

"One thing remains to me, and that is the best," cried Irma, suddenly rising, "solitude is mine. Alone and strong, and shut up within myself."

A waiting maid entered, and announced a lacquey from the queen. —

"Does the queen command me now? Immediately?" inquired Irma, after she had heard the message.

"Yes, my lady."

"I will come then."

"Walpurga was right," said she to herself. "I serve too."

She stood unwillingly before the mirror and had her dress arranged. — She smiled and tried to assume a cheerful unconstrained air, which she intended to wear before the queen.

It was necessary.

She went hastily to the queen. As she approached the door she drew herself up and assumed this cheerful smiling air. She entered the apartment into which, as usual, twilight alone was admitted.

The queen was sitting in a large arm-chair dressed in a robe of snowy white, and a small white lace handkerchief twisted lightly round her fair hair:

"Come to me, dear Countess," said the queen, "I am very glad to see you again, I see all my dear ones now afresh, as if I had been in another world during these weeks. I have been unfortunately rather fatigued again lately. I have to thank you especially. I hear that you interest yourself kindly in the nurse,

and cheer her spirits, and thus do good to the prince also; the king concurs with me entirely that you are a true blessing to us. I will write to your father, and tell him how happy it makes us that you are with us. He will then not grudge you so much."

Irma was glad that the queen spoke so long. It gave her time to recover her self-composure.

"Give me the letter, which lies on the table there," said the queen. Irma brought it, and the queen continued:

"Read these lines, which the king writes." Irma read:

"Let me have regular tidings through Countess Irma, as to the welfare of our son. Greet for me the fourth dear leaf of our trefoil." Irma laid down the letter again with thanks. It vexed her deeply that the king should now compel her to write to him, and in such a manner: Walpurga was right, glances of love had been exchanged over the cradle of the child.

Irma would gladly have sunk on the ground, so heavily oppressed did she feel.

"You will, dear Countess," said the queen again, "you will do us the favor and write."

Irma bowed and the queen continued. "Certainly you will not have much to write. A human being, because it is the highest in the creation is slower in its developement than other things."

"Then a prince must be still slower in his developement," Irma would have liked to have added, but she only nodded and smiled. She was not at all in a mood to enter into the queen's mode of thought: She saw in it only nursery ideas, for which she had now no sympathy. And were they even more, were they

the highest of their kind, what would it be to me, thought she. Here as in Gunther's house, there is a life separate in itself, satisfied in itself. Here is the mother and her child — what have I to do here? — to chatter, to sympathize, always only to sympathize, and each is a whole for itself, and has a world for itself, and I have only always to sympathize? To receive alms? there from friendship, here from favor? I am a whole in myself, or I am not.

And while such was the language in Irma's heart, the queen continued in her agitated manner, as if speaking from the depth of her soul:

"I ever stand with astonishment and devotion before the miracle of life. You have also certainly thought upon it, what an infinity lies before a child when for the first time it breathes and opens its eyes; air and light are the first and last messengers on earth. The first breath and the last breath, the first glance, and the last glance! How wonderful!"

Irma felt the meaning of service. — Had she been free like the speaker, she would have said: "Dear friend, I am not just now inclined, nor capable of receiving what you have said; with you, in your soul, it is quiet, it is calm early morning — but in me it is hot burning noon-day. — I pray you leave me now to myself ...."

A deep longing for unlimited solitude was in Irma's heart; but she dared not foster it. — She dared not even express it; she would gladly have closed her eyes, and yet she was obliged to force herself to be attentive. She heard, she answered, but her heart and feelings were far away. For the first time she felt re-

bellious, that she should not have her full right towards a fellow-being. She was angry with the queen. — She was often on the point of relating her visit to the physician's house, but the life there suited not this unchangeable twilight, and it seemed to her as if she dared not bring the noble citizen's wife, whose foot had never yet crossed the palace entrance, even in thought hither, and her mind wandered to her father and his strong sense of independence.

Such were the thoughts passing through her mind, and yet she spoke of the prince and his growth, and of Walpurga's cheerful peculiarities.

The queen observed a shadow in Irma's manner; she wished to cheer her and said: "Ah! dear Countess, I am truly pining for some music. Our friend Gunther does not allow me to hear any music, he says I must still spare my nerves, but you might sing me a little song. — I hear you have learnt a beautiful new song from the nurse — won't you sing that to me? May I order your zitter to be fetched?"

Irma could have screamed aloud, but she bowed again in assent, and ordered the lacquey to fetch the zitter from her room. He brought it, and Irma now sang to the queen the song —

We two are so united,
So happily allied,
And blissful are the moments,
When we are side by side.

My heart doth wear a fetter
That thou hast o'er me thrown;
And I my life would wager
None doth a heavier own.

In Irma's soul there vibrated a shrill and cold ac-

companiment to this song; every word had its double meaning.

"I must sing this to the queen!" something whispered in her, while she sang. "Yes, you two are so united! The happy are all united, the unhappy alone are solitary ...."

She sang in gloomy despair, with anger in her heart.

"You sing that song with deep feeling," said the queen. "And so, my son hears that? One cannot say, hears, for he does not yet hear or see anything definitely. Will you sing that song once more, that I may sing it to myself afterwards."

Irma sang it again and this time more freely. The queen thanked her heartily.

"I may only now unfortunately speak for a short time, dear Countess, with those who are dear to me. I am so glad that we are going again to the summer palace; we shall then be a great deal together and with the child. Adieu, dear Countess, write soon, and sing your beautiful feelings into my child's heart."

Irma went. She paused often as she passed through the long corridors, she had to remember where she was; at length she reached her room. She ordered her horse to be saddled at once, and a groom to be ready.

She had just changed her dress, when a servant brought her a letter, she broke it open with a trembling hand and read: "My child, you have now been eighteen months in the court. I have left you free to do as you like. I have much I should like to say to you, but I cannot write. Writing estranges us. Your rooms are ready in their old condition; flowers too are awaiting you. It is now the beautiful summer season. The

apples on your tree are already getting their rosy cheeks. I should like to see your's again. Come to

YOUR FATHER."

Irma threw up her hands. "This is deliverance! Yes, I have still a home, still a heart on which I can lay my head. I come, I come, father."

Every thing swam before her eyes, she wrung the bell and ordered that the groom should unsaddle the horses — she was not going to ride out.

Then she ordered her maid to pack up clothes sufficient for some weeks; she asked another audience of the queen and begged for leave of absence.

"I am sorry that you are also going to leave me," said the queen, "but I will gladly do without you, if only you are happy, and I hope you will be so now and ever. — Do everything you can to be in perfect harmony with your father. Believe me, Irma, in all the relations of the world, as wife to husband, as mother to child, one feels oneself always advancing, striving; one has always to be growing and progressing with the time; as a child alone, one is wholly satisfied and complete, then alone is one a perfect satisfied being."

The queen and Irma did not accord to-day; Irma was in a restless hurry — she wanted to go away; whatever detained her only a second was a hindrance to her.

What the queen said might be graceful, but it was only for the calm, it was not for those on the tiptoe of departure.

Still the farewell was hearty. The queen kissed Irma.

The formal assent of the Lady of the Chamber had still to be obtained, and this also was given.

Irma had also to take farewell of the physician and his family. She wished to bid him good bye through Colonel Bronnen, or through Baron Schöning, who was often as he said at the physician's house; she had also to bid good bye to these men, and to her companions at the Court. Now when she wished to leave, she saw how many people she still had around her. But where were they when she wanted them? They were just there that she should not want them. Such is the world. But stop — there was one person to whom she must say farewell, one above all. — She hastened to Walpurga.

"Walpurga!" she exclaimed, "to-morrow morning when you get up, shout a loud 'Huzza!' I shall then be at home on our mountains, and I will huzza back again, that the whole world may ring with laughter. I am going to my father."

"I am very glad." —

"And you are not at all sorry that I am going away?"

"Certainly I am — but when one has a father alive, one ought not to miss looking into the eyes that are only once for us on earth. I am so glad for your father that he has such a child to look at. — Oh! if my little Burgei were but so big!"

"Walpurga, I am going also to your husband, to your child, and to your mother; and I shall sit down at your table and greet your cow and your dog. I shall go to them, you may rely upon it."

"Oh! that will be a pleasure — if only my Hansei is at home and not in the wood."

"Then I will have him fetched — now good bye — and don't forget me." —

"You may rest assured of that," said Walpurga, and Irma hastened away. —

She had still to write to her friend:

"Emmy, Two hours ago I had a letter from my father — He summons me home. — I have leave of absence for fourteen days.

"Emmy, I have leave of absence. Do you know what that is? I am obliged to promise certainly to return — I don't know that I shall keep the promise. The ground trembles beneath me, and my brains swim. The world is a chaos, but light will come. Any one can cry, let there be light. If we did only always do what we can do.

"But now enough — I will write no more. I shall soon see you. Come as soon as possible to Wildenort to —

YOUR IRMA."

Postscript — "I will take no excuse, you must come. I promise you in return to be at your wedding. — Greet all your belongings from me, and above all your Albert."

When the sun was beginning to decline, Irma set off with her maid to her father's estate.

NINTH CHAPTER.

So one can thus get away, and leave all behind, all the motley sameness of the so-called great world. Farewell, palace, give your inmates their daily cake of amusement! Farewell, streets with your shops and offices, your beer-houses and churches, your theatres, concert-halls, and barracks, may fashion favor you, and give you customers, clients, guests, applause, and promotion. Vanish, vain frippery of the world! I am like a bird flying away from the house top into the wide world. How foolishly one holds oneself in a cage, and the door is still always open. Thou great world bailiff, who enthralls us so closely, thy name is custom and fashion.

Thus thought Irma, speaking half aloud to herself, as she sat in the carriage and drove out into the open world.

She never thought for a moment how it was now in the great house which she had left. — It was the dinner hour. — The queen was expected to appear. — It was a pity that the Lord steward had not been present at the creation of the world, for at the court every one has his fixed place and the service is regulated exactly. — The queen expressed her regret at the departure of the good Countess Irma. All praised her.

"Oh! she is so very good."

"And so merry."

"A little unmanageable, but very *aimable!*" —

But what is there new to talk of? — It is tedious

to remain on one subject — come to the rescue, Samiel Schnabelsdorf!

"Away with every thing!" cried Irma suddenly. No more reflections — forward, to my father."

The horses stepped out bravely, as if they knew that they were carrying the child to her father. Irma was so impatient, that she called to her servant on the box, that he might promise a double fee if they would drive quicker.

She wanted to reach her father. She could not wait until she laid her heavy head upon his breast.

What would she? Complain to her father? How should he help her? She knew not. Only this she knew — that there must be peace with him, she would be protected, sheltered, no longer alone. To obey her father — to comply with his wishes — would be her highest happiness. To be disburdened of her own self, to will no longer aught but what gives joy to another. Oh! how blissful! — The whole heaviness of earth would be removed, thus must it be with the blessed spirits — so must the ministering Angels think, they wish for nothing, they need nothing, they alter not, they grow not, they are neither young nor old, they are eternal, and they work eternally for others through another, and what they work is joy for the world and joy for themselves, they are rays from an eternal sun, and they die not but shine for ever.

In this unintelligible dream Irma drove along, and the whole world spoke to her only the single words, Father, — Daughter! —

She calmed herself. She must not arrive at the castle in this excited state.

Excitement is weakness, and her father had always

endeavoured to foster in her strength and quiet composure.

Irma constrained herself to pay regard to passing things.

The evening twilight had set in when they reached the first posting house. Irma fancied she could already feel the air of her native mountains, and yet they were still far off.

They went on rapidly. The evening bells were ringing, the air resounded for the men at work, announcing time and eternity to them in its distant echo. What would the world be without the ringing of bells? This peeling harmony is a compensation for all the forms of beauty in antiquity. —

These thoughts also did not satisfy Irma. They carried her ever beyond the things around her, and she longed to be wholly absorbed in all that was present and certain.

In the villages through which they drove, and out in the fields, they heard singing; it was interrupted by the clatter of the carriage, and Irma thought: we make too much noise in the world with ourselves, and therefore do not enjoy the world.

No thought satisfied her, no view pleased her. —

The stars came out in the sky, but what were they to men? He who is free, who seeks for nothing on earth, they may shine for him; she however was seeking, and she saw in the vast circle of the world nothing but two starry eyes directed to herself, and they were her father's.

They went on, and lazy horses and sleepy postillions were called up at the post houses.

Midnight was long over when they reached Wildenort.

Irma alighted at the manor house and went alone with the servant and knocked.

Her father had not expected that she would have arrived so soon. The large house with its extensive out-buildings was lightless. — The dogs barked as if strangers were coming, not a creature knew the daughter of the house, she was a stranger.

Two ploughboys passed by. They looked astonished at the beautiful lady in the night, and she was obliged to tell them that she was the daughter of the House. —

She ordered her rooms to be opened. Not far from them slept her father. — She longed to see him, but she overcame herself. He ought to sleep quietly, and not to know that she was breathing near him. She, too, soon fell asleep, and did not awake till broad daylight.

Old Eberhard came with soft footstep into the ante-room, where Irma's maid was already sitting.

"My lady is still asleep; it was three o'clock and was beginning to dawn when we arrived," said she.

"Why did you hurry so and take no rest?"

"I don't know, but my lady was so excited on the way, she could not go quick enough. When my Lady wishes any thing, it must all be done quickly, suddenly."

"Who are you, dear child?"

"Her Ladyship's maid." —

"No. Who are your parents? How did you get to the court?"

"My father was riding master to Prince Adolar and the Princess had me educated in the convent." —

"A chain of circumstances from generation to generation" — thought the old man to himself. —

The maid contemplated him with a strange expression. —

He was a tall, broad-shouldered figure. He wore the mountain dress, and a white horn hung from his neck. The broad head, a little bent forward, placed on his brawny neck, the thick short-kept grey beard, and closely trimmed grey hair, the brown eye still bright with youth and the expressive countenance like some embossed work, — the whole form was like that of a knight, who had just laid aside his armour, and had put himself at ease.

"I wish to see my daughter," said the old man as he went into the adjoining room.

It was dark. Eberhard glided in on tiptoe and drew gently back the green damask window curtain, letting in a broad ray of light; he stood by the side of the bed, and gently breathing, contemplated the sleeping girl. —

Irma was beautiful to look at. Her head encircled by the long loose gold-brown hair, the clear arched brow, the delicately curved nose, the mouth with its exquisitely bow-like lip, the rosy chin, the full cheeks with their peach-like tint — over the whole countenance there lay a calm peace. The small white hands were folded together over her breast.

Irma breathed heavily, and her lips quivered as with a painful smile. The sleep is often heavy when the hands are folded on the breast. — The hands gently loosened themselves, but the left one remained lying

on her heart; her father took it cautiously and placed it by her side. Irma went on sleeping quietly. Inaudibly the father took a chair and sat down by the bed of his child. Two pigeons flew upon the broad window-sill and cooed together: the old man would have liked to frighten them away, but he dared not move.

Irma slept on and heard nothing. Suddenly as the pigeons flew away, Irma opened her eyes. —

"My father," she cried, throwing her white arms round his neck and kissing him. "At home! Oh! how nice, how nice! Do open the other curtain too, that I may see you quite! Oh do open the window, that I may drink in the air of my home!

"Oh! my father! I have been away and I am again with you, and you won't let me go again. You will bear me in your strong arms. Oh! it strikes me now, what you said to me in my dream. I was standing with you up there on the Gamsbühel and you took me in your arms and carried me, and said: see, my child, so long as one of your parents lives, it is as if we were carried through the world. Oh my father, where was I? Where am I now?"

"Be calm, my child! You were at the court, and you are at home again. You are excited, calm yourself. I will call your maid. I have waited breakfast for you. All is ready for us both in the arbour."

The father kissed his daughter's forehead, and said:

"I am kissing all your good and pure thoughts, and now let us be together like simple sensible beings."

"Oh your voice, oh all of it! At home in my father's house! All the life outside is only sleeping in one's clothes,

it is only at home that one lies truly in bed, with no fetter to oppress.

Her father was in the act of going, but Irma held him back.

"It does me such good," said she, "to lie here and to look at you, to have you to look at and to think of."

Her father passed his hand across her forehead, and she said:

"Let your hand lie here. I now believe in the healing power of the imposition of hands, I feel it in myself."

The father stood for a time by his daughter's bed, and held his hand on her brow.

At length he said:

"Now get up, my child. I wait for you at breakfast."

"It is nice that anyone can order me to get up," said Irma.

"I do not order you, I only advise you. But child! strange things must have happened to you, that you take nothing in its literal meaning."

"Yes, father, strange things! But now no more...."

"Then come soon, I wait for you."

The father went out and waited in the arbour. Many a time he placed and replaced the two cups and the beautiful vase of flowers, and arranged the white table-cloth — at last came Irma in her white morning dress.

"You are . . . . you are taller than I thought," said the father, a flush passing over his whole countenance.

He stroked his daughter's face, and said:

"You have a pale hollow in your rosy face, rising from the jaw to the cheekbone, just like your mother."

Irma smiled, then she clasped again her father's hands, and looked into his eyes, with an expression so happy, that in spite of the constant equanimity the old man preserved, his eyes overflowed with tears. He endeavoured to conceal it, but Irma said:

"It detracts nothing from your heroic strength. Oh father, why are we slaves of ourselves? Why should we be afraid of showing ourselves as we are? Your great principle is indeed to follow our nature. Why do we not always follow our inner nature? Oh father, let me exult in my native mountains, in the forests, and the lakes: My everlasting friends, I am here, I am with you, and I will be true as you are! And, Sun, let me greet you, and yonder grave-stone, beneath which my mother rests — —"

She could say no more. After a time the old man said:

"Well, my child, we ought to live out our lives, pure as nature; but it is not from fear of ourselves, it is not self-imposed slavery, when we avoid and shun such scenes, such violent agitations; it is because we feel deep within us, that the next moment, the hour that must follow, must appear bare and empty; it is a leap from the excited life of feeling into the daily world. That is why we restrain ourselves and must do so, for these feelings ought not to exhaust themselves in a so-called burst of devotion, they ought to pass through our whole life and thoughts, through every thing small and insignificant, which we have to do; that is the home of our highest thoughts. Yes, my child, it comes to this, that it is just those who so divide life and violate one side of it, who render it wicked, and yet at the same time secretly flatter themselves: ah! how

beautifully, how grandly have we felt, and we are always capable of doing so."

The old housekeeper brought the coffee, Irma poured it out, and said that she expected Emmy also and her *fiancé*. Eberhard said:

"Years ago, when Emmy was here, you disputed upon just the same train of thought as now. We were up there on the Gamsbühel, where there is that view over the great lake, and we were awaiting the sunrise. Emmy, with her sober straightforwardness, said: 'I don't find it worth the trouble to break one's sleep on this account, and to give oneself so much trouble. I think sunset is just as beautiful, and one hasn't all this trouble about it.' — What was your answer?"

"Oh dear father, I don't remember it now."

"But I remember it still; you said: 'sunrise is much more elevating, but I don't know, what I shall do all day after having felt so elevated, that will be worthy of such feelings and in harmony with them. Therefore sunset is better for us, because then the world veils itself and lets us sleep. After the highest feelings have been excited, we can only sleep or have music.'"

"Oh father, I think so no longer. Yesterday during the whole drive the one thought ever pursued me: what do we really do in the world? The trees would grow without us, the animals in the field and in the air and in the water would live without us. Everything has of itself something to do in the world, man alone must make himself something to do. And so we paint and build and plough and study and practise for mutual manslaughter, and the only difference between man and beast is, that men bury their dead."

"Oh my child, have you so far ventured? I am

glad you are again with me. You must have struggled through a great deal. I hope you will learn again that simply to live in obedience to nature, that is, in obedience to reason, is our destiny. Look once more on the world!" he continued smiling. "A girl one and twenty years old and a countess to boot, asks: why am I in the world? Aye, my child, to be beautiful, to be good, to be as beautiful as possible, both in outward form and inward nature. Keep yourself so in the world, that you may be able to wish that every one may know you thoroughly . . . But enough of that."

It was an hour full of happiness, as the father and daughter sat together in the arbour; and Irma repeatedly expressed the wish that she could always live thus.

The whole world existed no longer for them; they two were alone in the world.

"You have grown into my great girl," said the father. He really meant to say, "You must have experienced much, that coming home to your father, you have nothing small, nothing personal to relate" — he longed to say that; but he only repeated, "You have grown into my great girl."

"And father," asked Irma, "you will command me now to remain with you?"

"You know ever since you reached consciousness, I have never commanded you in anything," replied her father. "You must live according to your own conviction. I desire not the sacrifice of your will and reason."

Irma was silent. She had not realized what she had hoped, she saw herself again thrown upon her-

self, she must herself accomplish everything; and she would do so.

A forest-keeper came and asked Eberhard about arrangements in the forest. Eberhard replied that he would ride out himself. Irma begged to be allowed to accompany him, and soon she again appeared in her hunting-dress, and rode with her father across the meadows into the wood.

Irma's air grew bolder again, as, seated on a spirited horse, she rode away through the shady dewy wood.

While her father gave his orders in the forest, Irma lay on a little rising ground covered with moss, under a spreading fir-tree. Suddenly she awoke; for her father's dog, grown quickly familiar with her, licked her hand. She got up, went towards the field at the edge of the forest, and the first thing that met her eyes was a four-leaved trefoil. She stooped quickly, broke it off, and put it in her pocket. Her father came; he saw her beaming countenance, and she said:

"This rest on the ground has done me such good!"

Her father answered nothing. It did not seem necessary to him to talk himself tired over every feeling. Irma looked up surprised; in the world of conversation, small coin is exchanged over every observation.

They soon returned home.

At noon they sat together in the cool library.

Over the door stood in golden letters that sentence of Cicero's:

"When I am alone, then am I least alone."

Her father wrote. Many a time he threw a glance at his child, who was reading Shakespeare. She was

reading the highest thoughts, she was receiving them into her mind, and they would become her own. Eberhard felt happy to see his own views in another's eye, to hear his own thoughts from another's lips — and these, the eye and lips of his child; his own feelings fostered in hers, and yet all again independent, new, combined with her innate nature and her peculiar impressions. The ideal, which he had dreamed of in the blooming days of youth, was now realized before him.

Eberhard closed his pocket-book and smiled to himself; he was not as strong as he thought he had been, he could not go on working to-day as yesterday, now that his child was there.

He sat down by Irma, and pointing to the works of Spinoza and Shakespeare, which always lay on his work-table, he said:

"To these two men the whole world is open. They lived centuries ago, and I have them on my quiet mountains always with me. I shall pass away, and leave no trace of my thoughts behind me; but I have lived the enduring life with the highest minds. The tree, the beast, they only live for themselves, and only for the space of time allotted to them. We receive with our life the mind of centuries; and he who in truth becomes a human being, is the whole humanity in himself. So you too go on living with your father, and with all that is genuine and beautiful in the history of the human race."

There was a long silence in the library. Then her father asked:

"Is not the carriage in which you came, one of the royal carriages?"

"Certainly."

"Then you will again return to the court?"

"Father, don't let us discuss that now. I am not as strong as you, thus at once to turn from the highest things to daily matters."

"My child, daily matters are the very highest."

"But I don't want to know just now that there is a court — that I have been anything else, or shall be anything else than a piece of your heart and your mind."

"No, you must live for yourself. But, if you will remain with me, you can simply send the carriage back."

"I must return again, if only for a time. I have only leave of absence. I have taken no farewell. My father, the best thing would be for you to accompany me, and to bring me back again."

"I cannot go with you to the court — that you know; and I rely on your having strength enough to take yourself. I contemplated you to-day as you lay sleeping. There is no falseness in you, no bad passions have yet darkened this countenance. I know your brother wishes to have you married; I too wish that you should become a good wife and mother. I only fear that you may have become too much your own to be another's. Well, let that be. My child, look out into the distance. Millions of flowers are blooming there, and they bloom silently; if a traveller comes, whose eye they delight, or who gathers one — well, then it has lived for him; had it blossomed unseen in the quiet soil, then it had lived for itself. Yet, my child, don't err through my wish. How long is your leave?"

"Fourteen days."

"Then let us be true and happy together, and then do according to your judgment."

TENTH CHAPTER.

THE days flowed evenly by.

Eberhard visited none of his neighbours, though he gladly associated with the burgomaster of the village, who was a deputy to the diet, and he arranged with him the affairs of the community.

Irma was much alone. She read, she embroidered, she painted, and sang. After a few days she felt a certain insipidity. The question arose in her — what is this life? To what end? I work for my dress, — dress for my mind, for my body. To what end? The mirror looks at me, the walls hear me, and my father an hour at noon and an hour in the evening.

She sought to overcome her high soaring nature, and she succeeded. This alone she could not overcome — that she thought of an absent one; and she looked round as if she heard his footstep, and it seemed as if he was breathing near her. And this man was . . . . the king.

She could not but think how he had expected a letter from her, and what had he received instead? The tidings that she had gone away. Why did she offend and vex him?

She was many times on the point of writing to the king from home; she would confess to him that she had fled from him—no, not from him, from herself. Thinking over the words of such a letter, she said to her-

self: Flight is not cowardice, it is only an extreme effort of power, an extrication, a rescuing of oneself. This she would explain to him. He was not to despise men, least of all her; his great wide-working authority was not to be injured nor disturbed by the consciousness that men did not comprehend what was noble. She owed it to him and to herself to explain this. But in writing, it was not to be notified in this way. She will return and tell him everything. And then apart from each other, they would be united in the highest thoughts, and it would be well worth while to spend a solitary life, when one has felt for one single moment the highest intercourse, and can preserve purity and fidelity to oneself and others.

Irma was happy in this self-deliverance.

She restrained herself from speaking of the Court before her father. Nevertheless many a time the remark involuntarily escaped her, how the King and Queen praised this and that, said this and that, and it was not to be mistaken that she placed an especial value on their opinion.

"Such are men," said Eberhard smiling, "they know themselves for what they are, they ought to know it, and yet they give the prince the right of coinage.—He has to decide: You are worth so much and so much, you a ducat, you a dollar, you a counter, you a Privy-Counsellor, you a colonel! The history of creation is ever renewed. Then it was the Creator who brought beasts before man that he might give them names; now the human animal comes to the prince and says: 'Give me a name, invest me with a title, else I am naked and bare and I am ashamed.'" —

Irma trembled at these sharp words. Her father's

solitude had brought him to this point. She could not refrain from adding:

"You are unjust to the King above all. His is a profound nature, full of generosity and mind —"

"Full of mind! I know that!" replied Eberhard. "Is it not true he can ask much, propose many problems, give for dessert a survey of church history, physiology, or any subject of knowledge at his pleasure, but he can never work himself without interruption, never read a book through, it is always extracts, always essences! I know that! And the court singers depreciate their thoughts accordingly. Think not, my child, that I undervalue the efforts of the king. It has been always said to him: 'You are a genius' — Kings are always persuaded they are geniuses, military, political, artistic, — everything — the phrases have been fathered upon him. Who ever approaches a prince, must also mentally wear a court-dress; he sees men and things not as they are, everything is dressed up for him in an agreeable form. I believe the king has, in spite of this, the honourable endeavour to see the reality; this is much, but he cannot free himself from the magic ban of phraseology."

Irma's lips trembled. She did not believe that her father intended to kill her interest for the king, he could not know that it existed; but this opposition provoked her, and she perceived with terror that there was no help here. She could have lived alone with her father, if he like herself had honoured the noble man. It need have been no contradiction to his republican feeling, nor above all to his sense of justice, to honour nobility of mind even when it appears in a prince. But now he had shattered every bridge of

mutual understanding and justice. Had another spoken thus of the king, she would have made him feel her wrath; now it was self-command and submission enough to be silent.

Her very heart felt closed, as if never to be again unlocked.

She was a stranger in her father's house and she now doubly felt that she had never been at home there. She compelled herself to cheerfulness and equanimity.

Eberhard saw that she compelled herself to something, but he thought it was only the struggle between court life and solitude. He did not help her, she ought alone to bear out this struggle — then she would gain true peace.

On Sunday morning, — Eberhard never went to church — he said, —

"Have you leisure to listen to a long story?"

"Certainly."

"Then I will give you my testament while I am in health."

"Father, don't do that. Spare me such a thing."

"I do not mean a testament of my possessions, only of that which I am myself. We have no picture of your good mother, you children have no idea of her appearance, who was so pure, so lovely, so sunny. I should like to give you instead a picture of my life. — Take care of it. Who knows when again I may be so fit for it. Ask me when you do not understand anything or when you have any misrepresentation to blame. No objection from others interrupts me, I continue my life, nothing disturbs me, I have accustomed myself to cultivate my property, to give orders and answers to my servants, and immediately afterwards to continue

uninterruptedly my consistent line of thought. So you may interrupt me too when you like . . . . . My father, who was a free count, was proud of his political relations to the empire; to the very last day he never recognised the unity of the kingdom, and constantly asked, how matters were progressing there. He still regarded his territory as distinct from the rest, and his family as equal with all princely houses."

"And why, dear father," asked Irma, "will you destroy this beautiful enduring remembrance?"

"Because history has destroyed it, and justly so, — new families must always rise up to take the lead, this alone preserves the life of our race. But I do not wish to tell you of my father, — I passed a happy youth in his home. My teacher was, it is true, an ecclesiastic, but at the same time he was a free man. The year before my father died, I entered the army. I may say that I had a fine bearing. This was due to some external advantages, and an iron frame. I was with my regiment in the fortress of the league. I was thrown in a desperate ride and dislocated my hip, so that for a long time, I was confined to my room. Here I became more intimately acquainted with our Regimental Surgeon Gunther. — Has the physician never told you of our being together?"

"Yes — but only briefly, only alluding to it. — The king told me lately, I was right; the physician gives spoken prescriptions also only when they are desired and are necessary."

"So, so — then the king told you you were right, — 'you are right' — that is a decree to make one happy for one day — perhaps for longer — is it not?"

"Father — will you not tell me further of your common life with Gunther?"

"Ah! child, that was a wonderful time. I dived with him as deeply as I could into the study of philosophy. I could still point out, as if it were only just passed, the place on the fortress wall and the hour — it was a dull autumn evening, I can still see the leaves falling from the trees — when Gunther during our walk put before me for the first time those mighty words of the philosopher: 'It lies in the original nature of everything to preserve its existence.' I stood still. At that moment it came over me like a revelation, and has never left me since. It has been concealed by the circumstances of life, but this sentence has always continued to live within me: preserve thy being! I have lived true to this great motto — alas! as I now see — only too truly and selfishly.

"A man does not fully live, when he only lives for himself and preserves his existence. Yet this I will later confess to you, unreservedly, to you only. The great right of sovereignty belonging to every man — this I have only subsequently learnt wholly and rightly to recognise. I had thought over many things, but never in a conclusive connection. You cannot imagine what it is for a favorite and respected officer to venture upon philosophy — how opposed it is to the military service, appearing unsuitable to your superiors and laughable to your comrades. — Military duty tires out the body in daily, and for the most part superfluous, exercises, and this renders it difficult to subject oneself to any mental discipline. I often sent in my name as sick, banished myself to my room in the most beautiful

weather, only that I might be able to fix my mind on my studies.

"Our regiment was again removed back to the capital. Gunther accepted my offer of retirement; he became an academical teacher, and I attended lectures. But I saw the deficiencies of my knowledge, and longed to live only for the maturity of my culture. An unexpected event effected this — I became gentleman of the bedchamber, and lived much at the court. Even at that time, I saw that an innate feeling of servility exists in man; every one is delighted that others should stand below him, and for that end he gladly submits that others should stand above him. Princes are not guilty of this absurd gradation.

"I was one day at the summer residence, the king had gone to the chase, the dinner hour had long arrived, but nothing was to be seen of the king. The gentlemen and ladies of the court, whatever their titles may be, ran about the park, sat here and there on seats, looked through telescopes, chattered and yet adhered to no conversation, for the well-dressed lords and ladies — young and old —, were all of them hungry, and yet their shepherd came not to feed them. Your uncle Willibald silenced his craving stomach from time to time with biscuits, which did not destroy his appetite. Hour after hour passed. — They walked about like the Jews on the long day. But they laughed and jested. They attempted at any rate to laugh and jest, famished as they were. And your uncle had at home thirty horses in his stable, and oxen and cows enough, vast pasture lands all round, and here he served and waited, for he was proud of being Lord high steward. At that time, my child, I was as old as you are now,

and I then swore in my heart: I will never serve any man. At last the king's hunting carriage drove past, every one greeted, every one put on a pleasant face, yet the king was in an ill humour; General Kont, who had been out hunting with him, had shot a stag with twelve branches, whilst it was a rule that until his majesty had hit something, no one else might fire. The General was immensely unhappy at his hunting success, and when the beautiful animal arrived and was brought into the palace yard, he hung his head as mournfully as that of the dead animal. He excused himself repeatedly and lamented that his majesty had not shot the stag; the prince however congratulated him, though in a very sour manner. The king looked at me and asked: "How are you?" "Very hungry, your Majesty," I replied. The king smiled, and the whole court were shocked at my impertinence.

"We had now to wait half an hour longer, till the king had changed his attire, and then dinner was served.

"My child, if you tell this story to a courtier, he will think me horribly simple. But on that evening, I ate for the last time at a royal table.

"I see I have been talkative, I am an old man. I only wanted to say to you: look round you, see, how many men are wasted and must be wasted.

"The idea of princely dignity is grand and beautiful. The prince ought to represent in himself the unity of the state. But beautiful as is the idea in its origin — it is rendered irreconcilable to me from the fact, that for its execution a pyramid of worn-out men, deprived of all their human dignity, is necessary.

"Irma, it seems to me, as if I must lay the testament of my feelings in your heart. From the moment

when you feel that one particle is taken from the crown of your human dignity, from this moment, flee, without hatred and scorn, for he who bears hatred and scorn in his heart, is heavily burdened and can never breathe freely. I do not hate and despise this world, I see in it only a world, strange, past, and remote, and I can hate and scorn no one for his belief, because it is not my own.

"Yet — I did not mean to teach you, I wish to talk to you. I took my leave, and went to the university as an actual student, but I soon left this also again, to study agriculture. I then travelled. I was, as you know, a whole year in America. I desired to become acquainted with that new phase of history, in which men, resting on the innate freedom of their own minds, are not always looking backwards to Palestine, Greece, and Rome. I did not find the world to come in America. Everything is still fermenting there, as in a primitive process. Whether a really new humanity will be born from it, I know not. So far however I do know, that all mankind are hoping and waiting for a new moral civilization. I shall die, without having lived to see it.

"Whether the world to come is to be conceived in pure idea, or whether again to be modelled after some great example, I know not. I hope the first, but I do not yet see the realization.

"Now on with my life.

"I returned home. I had the inexhaustible happiness of meeting your mother. She was alone in the world. I have experienced the highest happiness, there is no second. Your mother died three years after your birth. I cannot tell you particulars about her, her whole appearance was purity and power. The world called her

cold and reserved, and she was ardent and open, beautiful to her very heart, but only for me. I know, that I should have become better and softer, had she remained with me. I dare not think of it. It was not to be.

"But I have been sanctified through her; no base thought abides in my soul, and no act have I committed since then, that I dare not acknowledge to you, my daughter.

"She died and I stood again with my violent nature confronted with the riddle of life.

"I could not give you a stepmother and I became a stepfather. Yes, let me say it, I am unmercifully faithful to myself. I know, if any one heard me, they would regard the word as exaggerated, the custom is indeed very good, but I cannot absolve myself: I have exposed my children! I gave you to your aunt, till you should go into the convent, Bruno remained with me, till he was sent to school. You were in excellent schools with high terms, but you were still exposed. You did not know your father, you knew that he lived, but you have not lived with him, you have grown up like orphaned children.

"It is now two years, since I have acknowledged this to myself. It has deprived me of sleep for weeks, it has robbed me of thought and feeling, but nevertheless I adhere to it. The demon, called sophistry, has ever said to me: Thou hast been able to do nothing for thy children, thou hast had too much to labour at for thyself, and it is better, that they should become free human beings through their own strength than through thee — there may be truth in it, but nevertheless: — I have exposed my children." The old

man paused. Irma laid her hand on his and stroked it gently.

"Enough! I have said it.

"I lived here alone and yet not alone, I had intercourse with the finest minds, and managed our property with ease. I devoted myself to the affairs of my country, but I soon withdrew again. I can belong to no party, not even to that, which professes liberty. Many noble-hearted men belong to it, whom I honour, but they suffer also the frivolous among them, who venture to speak of equality and of all the highest subjects, and do not hesitate to sacrifice beings of their own kind. Frivolous nobles are only vicious, frivolous democrats are corruptors of ideas. He who cannot wish that the whole world may think and act like himself — he has no right to call himself an honest and free man.

"If liberty is not the basis of morality — what distinguishes it then from the nature of tyranny? What is tyranny? The selfish use of a being possessing equal rights with ourselves. — A tyrant is an atheist — a frivolous champion of liberty is a blasphemer; — I am regarding the essence of all moral universal law as God.

"I was a hermit in the midst of men, and I am now, happier and more consistent, apart from them.

"I live here now a solitary life."

"Is it not sad so alone?" asked Irma.

"It would be very sad if I felt myself alone," replied Eberhard — "but man must not feel himself alone even when he is alone. I am sensible of no ennui and no isolation. Men who have nothing in themselves are alone wherever they may be. But let me go on.

"The defection of Gunther pained me most of all.

But I blamed him unjustly. He was always a friend to court life; he saw in it the culminating point of culture. He was always too aesthetic: He often used to say to me, I have a right to the fair externals of life — to luxury, comfort, and all that, and it must be mine; this led him to the court and made him desert free science, and lose himself and me.

"You will have been told, and perhaps you have thought it yourself, that I am a misanthrope. He who hates mankind is a vain presumptuous fool. — What is he more than they? What is he other than they? I do not hate men.

"I only know that most of them are falsely dressed up, to make themselves something, or to be made something of by others, which they are not in reality. They give themselves the appearance — they know not that it is only appearance — of taking interest in things which they do not really care for. I have been much deluded and deceived, but if I speak honestly it is because I have deceived myself. I have given out my best feelings, and have imagined others were with me, and it was after all only politeness which made them assent in word and manner. They did not play the hypocrite. — It was I who deceived myself. I fancied myself in a world full of concord and harmony, and in truth I was alone, quite alone. Every one is alone who has an individual nature; there is no complete agreement.

To live out oneself — that is every thing. Most men however wish to be no self, and these are better as they are. They live as custom requires, as habit demands — nothing present approaches them, nothing past follows them; they jump, they spring, they trifle

from mood to mood, from enjoyment to enjoyment, and they are happy in all this, and glad when they see their old face in the glass; that alters not, that remains ever the same. If men always wore externally the expression of what was passing in their minds, you would recognise no one, no one from yesterday, no one from the previous hour. My child, I scarcely know to what I am really leading you; — I only meant to tell you that I am no misanthrope.

"I love all men. I know that at bottom they cannot be otherwise, and under all the false, and overloaded and glittering masquerade, there is in every man a noble nature beneath; only they cannot bring it out, and whatever they do that is false and cunning and evil, there still remains the sentence of our Great Example: 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And let me say this besides: I forgive even your brother. He has vexed me deeply, for the deepest vexation which a man can experience, is that from his own child.

"I can compel Bruno to nothing, and I will not. It is a strange world! through all ages the contest goes on between father and son. It is the same with us: my son represents the old time and I the new. I must bear it.

"I know that liberty alone is in accordance with nature and reason, but one can compel no one to the side of liberty. I will compel you also to nothing. Ordinary female natures like rather to be commanded than persuaded. I consider your's no ordinary one; you shall not be so — you shall —"

Eberhard had said at the outset that he would not allow himself to be interrupted, and now there came something which interrupted him.

A messenger brought a letter to Irma. She recognised the writing of her friend Emmy. She hastily broke open the letter and read:

"Irma — I cannot come to you, I am separated from the world. It is three weeks to-day since my Albert lost his life through the bite of a mad dog — my life too has ceased on this side the grave. I humbly submit to the inscrutable will of the Almighty. I have vowed to take the veil; I am now here, and I shall never leave this place. Come as soon as you can to your

sister Euphrosine
in the convent Frauenwörth."

Irma gave the letter to her father. He read it. —

"Two human lives annihilated by the bite of a mad dog — who will explain this?" cried Irma.

"Religion can do so as little as we can. It bids us, like our reason, to submit to the law of nature."

The messenger waited. Irma went to write an answer. She promised to go.

Eberhard sat alone in the mean while. — He had unveiled his life to his child — to his matured child — what would it avail? How often had he himself acknowledged: no teaching, not even the highest, changes the mind of man. Only life, reflection, the experience of facts in ourself and others — this alone converts the mind. It is the misery of dogmatism that it wishes to teach what only life can do. His children had not lived his life with him, and it is of no use to give them now the details of it, to explain his motives; it still remains strange to them, it has not

been lived together. It is contradictory enough that a father must tell his child of himself.

Eberhard confessed the consequences of his actions. He had no right to filial fidelity, at least not as he desired it, for he had lived for himself alone.

When Irma came and asked permission to be allowed to visit her friend Emmy in the convent, he nodded assentingly.

He had boasted that nothing interrupted him; he could adhere to this for himself but not for others. He had laid open his whole life to his child — who knows whether this one interrupting circumstance may not efface it all from her remembrance.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Irma drove in the open Royal carriage over the mountains and through the valleys. She lay leaning back on the cushions; her maid and a servant sat behind. The bad news of Emmy had prostrated her entirely, but as she drove along her feeling of strength returned. Travelling, change of scene — this always exercised a magic power over her.

Her father's narative echoed through her mind a great part of the way. She had listened to him with great interest, but what he had said made but little impression upon her. It is not all as difficult and important as he takes it, she said to herself; it lies in his individuality to leave it all to Fate; but no one else would do so.

It was enough that she would be just to his peculiarities; he could not have desired a distinct effect

upon her to be produced. Emmy's fate was horrible, maddening; that of her father not so. In his great life's sorrow, there was too much of self-torment. Her father spoke of repose, and had it not.

And so estranged was Irma's relation to her father, that in spite of all childlike feeling towards him, the expression of pain on his mouth, which was evident during his narrative, now occurred to her as similar to the expression of pain on the mouth of Laocoon.

Irma indignantly shook her head. What a chaos is this world!

A mad dog destroys a whole life, and here and there sit isolated beings tormenting themselves, every one feels a deficiency and a limitation, every one is longing for something and cannot attain to it, and in everlasting attempts, trials, measurings, and venturings, life passes away. In the midst of the chaos rose one form free, beautiful, and grand — sure of life, and truly master of life . . . . Irma turned round as if she would say: alas! it is not thou, my father; thou shouldest, thou couldest be so; it is he alone, he, the free man at the zenith of life — it is the king.

And as she thought of him, a smile hovered over her countenance; she looked freely up into the blue sky, and knew no longer whither she was driving; she only felt as if borne along by tender arms over mountain and valley.

An eagle flew high aloft over the mountain-height — for him there is no limit. Irma gazed long at the flight of the eagle upwards; she ordered the carriage to stop. They halted. The servant alighted to inquire what his mistress wished; she signed to him that he might get up again, and so she remained quiet in

the midst of free nature, surrounded with every comfort of rich life. She gazed long at the flight of the eagle as he floated and hovered in the air, until he disappeared in the clouds.

"If one must die, I should like to die so; to fly into heaven, and then to be no more," she said to herself.

They drove on. Irma did not alight; she did not speak a single word the whole way.

"We are here," said the lacquey towards evening.

They went down the mountain to the lake. The carriage stopped on the shore. On an island in the middle of the lake stood the convent. The curfew sounded over the lake; the sun was still above the mountains, but its rays were almost horizontal, and glimmered in the lake like lights floating here and there; the mirror-like waters were beginning to assume a golden hue.

The lacquey and the postilion took off their hats at the vesper bell, and the maid folded her hands; Irma also clasped her hands, but she did not pray; she thought within herself — "this ringing is beautiful and pleasing when we hear it from without, and then return again into the vast joyous world; but to those who hear this little bell in the cloister itself, it must sound every day as the knell of a day of death, for this life is nothing but daily dying."

Irma was not in a sympathizing mood with her friend in the convent; she endeavoured to force herself into a more harmonious state of feeling.

While the boat was being prepared, she heard the lacquey speaking to another servant who had quickly

come up, and whose face she recognised as belonging to the court.

She heard the court servant say:

"My master has been here for several days. He is waiting for something; I don't know what."

Irma would gladly have asked with whom he had come, but she could not bring out the words—a sudden fear shot through her.

She went into the boat with her maid. An old sailor and his daughter rowed the helmless bark. The lake was deep and dark, the sun was already declining, and the shadows of the mountains lay sharply defined on the hilly shore opposite; the fresh-fallen snow lay on the heights, and the white summits formed a striking contrast to the wooded range in front, and the clear blue sky. Here below all was as still and dusky as though it were the passage into the world of shadows.

"Is that your daughter?" asked Irma of the old sailor.

He nodded, as if pleased that she should speak the country dialect so well. Walpurga had kept her in practice.

"Yes," replied the sailor; "and she would like to get into service in some good family; she can sow well, and" —

"Remain with your father; that's the best you can do," said Irma to the girl.

They rowed quietly on.

"How deep is the lake here?" asked Irma.

"It must certainly be sixty fathoms deep."

Irma played with the waves; it delighted her that men should so easily and boldly row hourly over the

threatening grave; she bent over the side of the boat, and the sailor called out:

"Take care, Miss."

"I can swim," replied Irma, splashing with the waves.

"Yes — swim," laughed the old man; "most people can do that till it comes to the point, then it's all over, and when they have clothes hanging about them, there's but few that can do it."

"You are right there; the gay frippery draws us down."

The old man did not understand Irma, and was silent; she was full of uneasiness, and asked again:

"Are people often drowned in the lake?"

"Rarely; but there where we have just passed, there lies down below a young man twenty-one years old."

"How was he drowned?"

"They say he was intoxicated, but I think he had a sweetheart in the convent yonder. It was only well that she knew nothing of it."

Irma looked down at the waves, while the old man continued.

"And yonder on the rock there five years ago, the trunk of a tree struck a woodcutter down straight into the lake; and up there by the flood-gate, a cow-girl of fifteen years old was thrown into the current unawares by the fall of some wood, and the wood had torn all the clothes from the body, when the corpse reached the lake."

"Don't tell such frightful stories," said Irma's maid to the old man.

Irma looked up at the rugged mountains, and asked:

"Can one climb up there?"

"Yes, certainly, though it would be hard work; but everywhere, where there are trees men can climb."

Irma gazed at the lake and at the mountains. One could lose oneself in the world. How would it be if one did lose oneself, she said to herself.

She stood upright in the boat. The old man called out:

"Sit down, it is dangerous—you might turn giddy."

"I shall not turn giddy," said Irma, and she stood quite firm on the reeling little craft.

The old man felt superstitiously uncomfortable, and he asked:

"By your leave, the beautiful lady isn't going into the convent, is she?"

"Why — why do you ask?"

"Because I'd be sorry."

"Why be sorry? Don't the nuns lead a beautiful and peaceful life?"

"Yes, indeed; but theirs is a life in which nothing happens."

As if invoked by these words, Irma sat down and rose again, so that the boat reeled.

"A life in which nothing happens!" — they were words which touched a chord in her innermost heart. Her whole youthful power resisted this throwing away of existence, whether as with her father the mastery was gained by solitary thought, or as with the nuns by common devotion, it was a life in which nothing happens. Is one not placed here on the wide world to call everything his own? Come joy, come sorrow, come mirth, come sadness — I wish for no life in which nothing happens.

With these thoughts in her mind, she sprang to shore; she heard the sailor chain up the boat, and then she walked down the old lime avenue to the convent.

She inquired for sister Euphrosine.

All the nuns were in the chapel for vespers.

The ever-burning lamp was alone alight; the service was ended, but still the sisters remained kneeling on the ground. At length they rose — ghost-like forms out of chaotic darkness.

Irma went back into the parlour, but the portress informed her that she could not speak with Emmy that day; that it was not allowed for any of the sisters to receive any tidings, or to speak with any one after evening service. Irma therefore was lodged in the convent:

It was a mild September night, Irma sat long outside by the ferry, muffled up in her plaid, She knew no longer what she was thinking of. Her thoughts rambled into the boundless; only many a time it sounded to her as through the air: "A life in which nothing happens!"

The morning came. Irma was allowed after matins to visit her friend. She was frightened when she saw Emmy, yet there was still the beautiful mild countenance, only terribly disfigured by the close fitting head-dress of the nun, which wholly concealed her hair, and seemed to render her face too prominent.

After the first outburst of grief and sympathy, and a more detailed account of Emmy's horrible affliction, the latter said at last, as Irma again pressed her to her heart:

"Your embraces are so passionate! I know you will never learn humility; you cannot, you are of another

nature; but equanimity you ought to learn. Irma, you could never go into a convent, and you ought not, you would long to be out again in the world, you must be the wife of a brave man. But never think that your ideal will be realized. Our existence is fragmentary and full of misery, there is nothing beautiful and complete here below. But, Irma, take care of knocking against a barrier, or of overstepping it! Draw back while yet you stand on this side."

Emmy did not mention the king's name. The friends sat silent for some time.

It seemed to Irma as if she would be stifled by all that at present surrounded her.

Emmy spoke of that which had only happened a few weeks ago, as if decades had already passed by; she declared to her friend what a strength lay in continuous devotion, how it spun out the hours and made them grow into years full of blessed triumph over the world.

She extolled the happiness that it was possible on earth to do away with one's own name and all remembrances, and to gain an existence which without one steep step led uniformly onwards to eternal blessedness. Only Emmy complained to her friend what a tyranny it was that she was not allowed to take the veil; she might only remain here as a serving sister without vows.

"It is quite right that you should not do so," exclaimed Irma. "I imagine Bronnen loves you, but he is a man who respects the existing facts, his moral severity would not allow him to express a warmer feeling towards a betrothed girl, or to let it arise in his own

breast. He is worthy of you. I am far from saying that you now at once — how could you do that? how would he venture? But you ought to keep your life open, and after a year or more which you could spend in the convent, you should lead a beautiful and happy life, though perhaps no enthusiastic one, with that upright man — upright in the true sense of the word.— I will only now say to you: Do not fetter your future inclinations, your subsequent will and actions! No man should take a vow that binds him for life, and makes him to-morrow a slave, a liar, a hypocrite, and a deceiver to himself."

"Irma," cried Emmy, "what bad advice you are uttering! Is this the court language? Oh forgive me that I speak so; it is the old Emmy who did it, not I; forgive, I pray you, forgive me." She threw herself on her knees before Irma.

"Stand up," said Irma, "I have nothing to forgive you; I will speak more quietly. See, dear Emmy, it is a happiness for you that you can take no vows. A fearful blow has struck you, you are prostrated by it; but if you remain free, the heavy oppression of feeling will give way, and your grief will heal in your present seclusion, then you can go back to life when it calls to you; you must have here a place of refuge but no prison."

"Yes,' smiled Emmy, "you must think thus, but I — I will never see the world again from which my life has vanished. You cannot understand what it is to be only betrothed on earth, and to wait for heaven, to be united for ever. I have prayed to God to take from me my own heart, to banish every desire. — He has heard me. It is tyranny for men to

wish to urge their own mode of thought upon others; I know you will not do that. — Do you remember, Irma, when we first read the story of Odysseus, how he had himself bound to the mast that he might hear the song of the syrens, and yet not be able to follow it — do you remember what you then said?"

"No — I have quite forgotten."

"'The much extolled Odysseus,' you said, 'is a weak man and no hero. A hero must not allow himself to be outwardly bound, he must resist everything by his inward strength.' At that time I felt how powerful you were. And Odysseus was a heathen, and had no everlasting law. I rejoice in the everlasting law. I cling fast to this rock. I desire the fetters, the divine, the eternal fetters; they shall hold me if I sink, I wish not to be able to return to the world again. I wish to bind myself. And can there be men who call themselves free, and who forbid other men to tread their own path to perfection, to true eternal life? Is not that tyrannical, sad, and godless?"

"Yes, indeed it is so, but who forbids you?"

"The law of the state. It orders that the convent should die out. It is to receive no more young nuns."

"Does the law of the state command that?"

"Yes."

"The king must not suffer this."

Irma spoke this so loudly, that it echoed through the vault of the cell.

Emmy looked intently into Irma's face. If Irma could but effect that!

The two girls had not time to exchange a word further. They were summoned to the Lady Abbess.

As if the Lady Abbess had heard Irma's last words

she began at once gently but decidedly to lament the tyranny of the free thinkers — she did not condemn the originators — she prayed for them — but it was nevertheless atrocious that ancient sacred institutions should be annihilated and should be decreed to become extinct.

Irma's countenance glowed. She repeated that the law must be abolished; she would use her influence that it should be done. She offered at once to write to the king; the Lady Abbess readily assented, and Irma wrote:

Sire,

I am writing to you from the convent. I am, however, no nun. I fancy I have no turn that way.

But what laws of the state are those which prohibit a girl from taking the eternal vow? Is that liberty? Is that justice? or what is it? your Majesty, excuse my excitement! I am writing with convent ink upon convent paper, and it is not for the first time that with such ink and on such paper, liberty has been pleaded, genuine grand liberty.

Is it possible! Can one man forbid another to spend his life in common solitude? No quack can create life or positive happiness, but ought they to prevent unhappiness from being healed?

Your Majesty's great mind must not suffer such barbarity. It is barbarity, although varnished by the gloss of civilization.

Your Majesty, I see that I have not yet spoken plainly. I will force myself to do so.

I am here in the convent.

My friend Emmy, my only loved friend — I think I have spoken to your Majesty of her — wishes to

take the veil. She is right in her own way. Dogs become mad, even though the tax is paid for them. A mad dog has killed her lover, and she wishes to renounce her life — who dares to prevent it? And yet this convent, in obedience to the law of the state, is to die out, and to receive no more new nuns.

Your Majesty — you may not suffer this! you have a great historical perception — your life is a national history. You must teach your myrmidons to be greater. They must cancel the law. They must!

Your Majesty, pardon this language, but I cannot write otherwise. I feel myself as your deputy, I feel your high mind offended by this paltriness.

I hope soon to see your Majesty again,

"Your most respectful

IRMA VON WILDENORT."

Irma closed the letter, and placed within it the four-leaved trefoil which she still had with her.

With a feeling of pride Irma rowed back to the opposite shore. She thought she had accomplished a beautiful noble act of freedom, and though not yet completed she had urged it, and it must be carried out eventually.

The old ferry man was glad when he saw her. — He said nothing, he only firmly seized the oar; he smiled to himself, as if he had succeeded in carrying away a young soul from the land of shadows.

There was a boat in the distance, and in it a man in a green hunting-dress; he raised his hat and bowed.

The maid pointed him out to Irma, who, completely absorbed, was looking down into the lake.

Irma started.

"Is not that the king?"

The huntsman, who fancied himself not observed, fired his gun; the report reverberated among the mountains in a thousand echoes. The huntsman again raised his hat. Irma tremblingly waved her white handkerchief, and nodded in token that she had seen him.

The boat with the huntsman approached. A quickly changing expression of joy and disappointment passed over Irma's countenance.

It was not the king. —

It was Baron Schöning who greeted her.

He sprang into her boat, kissed her trembling hand, and said how delighted he was at meeting her there.

They drew to land. The baron offered Irma his arm, they went together along the shore, the maid went on in front. In the distance Irma saw the lacquey standing, who had yesterday spoken with her own. Had not the servant said that his master had been long waiting for something? Had not Baron Schöning previously shown her open attention? It was soon explained.

The baron began:

"We are here alone — only in presence of the mountain, the lake, and the sky. Dear Countess, may I express to you with all sincerity what I have long wanted to say to you?"

She nodded silently.

"Well then, let me tell you that you are not in your right place at the court."

"I also have not yet decided whether I shall return there again. But why do you think me in the wrong place there?"

"Because there is something in you that never can be at home at the court. You wonder that I say this

— I, the jester of the court, the amusement of the salon? I know that I have this title. And yet, Countess, they fancy that they trifle with me there, and I am trifling with them. You, Countess, will never be at home at the court. You do not accept the usages, and the whole life, as established and settled; but you view it all in your own peculiar aspect. Your mind cannot wear a court dress; your soul utters its deepest feelings in a dialect — the dialect of your soul's home; and when anything you may say gets abroad in the liveried world, it is thought — I know this on the best authority — extremely original, but you are and you will ever remain alien — utterly alien to those around you there."

"I had not imagined that you had dived so deeply into my heart. But I thank you."

"I do not dive into your heart, I live in it. Oh Countess! oh thou childlike and all-embracing heart, tremble not! suffer me — suffer me to clasp this hand, and to tell you that I too am a stranger there, and have resolved to withdraw myself, and to live for myself on my modest patrimony yonder. Irma, will you render my life a million times more heavenly? Will you be my wife?"

It was long before Irma could answer; at length she said:

"My friend — yes, my friend. On the island yonder there lives a friend of mine, and she is dead to herself and to me; fate means it well, and is giving me a friend in her stead. My friend, I thank you — but . . . I am confused at this moment, perhaps more deeply . . . Look here, dear Baron, do you see the little cottage up there, half way up the mountain? I

could live there, water my cabbages, milk my cow, plant my hemp, and spin my clothes, and could be happy, wishing for nothing — the world forgetting, and by the world forgot."

"You jest, dear Countess; you are imagining an idyll. The colours will only dance for a while, and then die away."

"I am not jesting. Alone, working for my daily bread, I could live; but as mistress in a castle, with all the trifles, with all the frippery of a cultivated world — no, no! To dress, only for the sake of looking at myself in the glass, that I will not do. In the cottage yonder I will live without a mirror; I need not see myself, and no one need. But if I am to live in the world, I must live wholly in the world, in the ruling centre, in the capital, and travelling about; I must have everything, or I must do without everything; only the one or the other can make me happy — nothing half and half, nothing between the two."

Irma spoke so decidedly, that the baron saw how thoroughly she was in earnest; it was something more than caprice and trifling.

"Either," she continued, "I must subject myself to the world, or I must subject it to me, while I despise it. Either I will never care how my fellow-beings regard me, or I will meet no eye — not even my own."

The baron was silent; he was evidently seeking for words to reply. At last he said:

"I would gladly have come to your father's house, but I know he does not like men of my class. I have waited here on the lake, I knew that you would come

to your friend. Tell me only this — will you return again to the court?"

"Yes," said Irma; and at this moment for the first time her resolve stood firm. "I should be ungrateful were I not to do so. I should be ungrateful to the queen, and to — the king, and all my friends. Oh my friend, I am not yet mature enough to lead a life in which nothing happens. I feel it!"

The two reached a seat on a rise of the shore.

"Will you not sit down with me?" said Irma to the baron.

They seated themselves.

"When did you leave the capital?"

"Five days ago."

"And everything is in its old condition?"

"Not everything, unfortunately. The physician has suffered a heavy loss; his son-in-law, Professor Korn, died suddenly from having poisoned himself in dissecting a corpse."

"From dissecting a corpse?" said Irma. "We all die from the poison of decay, only not so suddenly. Those on the island yonder, and we — all, all."

"You are very bitter."

"Not by any means. Only the strangest thoughts pass through my brain. I have learned a great law over yonder."

"The law of renunciation?"

"Oh no — the authority of fashion."

"You are laughing."

"No, in no wise. Look here, fashion is the badge of human liberty; the gazette of fashion is the highest prerogative of man."

"That is quaint."

"Not by any means; it is the simple truth. Do you not see? — man is all the higher in the scale of civilisation the oftener he changes his clothes in material, cut, and colour. It is only man who is ever clothing himself anew, ever differently. The tree retains its bark, the animal its coat; and the national costume, like the ecclesiastical costume, because it is stereotyped, is considered as belonging to a lower class, and controls its position."

The baron looked at Irma with a strange expression. In his heart he was glad that she had candidly refused him; hers would have been a nature which he could not have satisfied — an unspeakably fatiguing woman, requiring an everlasting firework display of mind. And she took delight in her own oddness. Suddenly he saw all the dark sides in Irma, whilst only an hour before he had not only seen her light side, but he had seen nothing but light in her. How was it possible, after a visit to a friend, about to take the veil, and immediately after a proposal of marriage, to fall into such a strange vein?

Baron Schöning told her he had ordered a photograph of Walpurga and the prince.

"Ah! Walpurga!" — said Irma, and a sudden thought passed through her mind.

The Baron took his leave in a very friendly manner, and rowed back across the lake.

Irma took the road homewards. — She inquired about the road over the mountains to the lake on the opposite side; she wished to visit Walpurga's belongings. They told her that no carriage could get there, that it was only to be reached on horseback.

Irma took the direct road back to her father.

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

"I lack something — I always feel as if some one was calling me, and I must look round, and I keep looking round. I'll wager the countess is thinking much of us. — Ah me! that's the best heart in the world."

Such was Walpurga's lament, for many days after Irma had left, whilst in the palace she was scarcely any longer remembered. Once one human being is away, dead, or on a journey, so soon another steps into his place; there is no gap, and no longing. It is all part of the world's history, and the history of the world never stands still.

Mademoiselle Kramer now continued to teach Walpurga writing, and the latter understood not what she meant when she said:

"People of quality like to begin all sorts of things, but it is for us to finish them. I have completed many a piece of embroidery, in which the hand that was kissed for it, scarcely did a couple of stitches. But that is the order of things."

With Mademoiselle Kramer everything was in order which people of quality did, at the same time she was accustomed not to speak before inferiors for the sake of being understood by them, but only for the sake of giving utterance to her thoughts.

The child flourished. Day after day passed in quiet regularity, and Walpurga now received the highest compensation for the loss of Countess Irma, for the queen was permitted to have the nurse and the child daily with her for several hours.

While Irma in the world outside, where she sought for repose and peace, found chaos ever more and more, to the queen here, all existence seemed transparently bright.

She had also learnt a new and difficult lesson of the perplexities of life, but now her mind had become perfectly satisfied and healthful. She contemplated the child, and when she spoke, Walpurga often folded her hands and listened silently; she did not understand everything, but she felt what was passing. The queen consoled the physician upon his family affliction and represented the comfort which a mother had in her child; if the world were ever so full of contradictions and riddles, in every child there was given afresh the possibility of a better humanity. The queen looked round, as she spoke, towards the child which lay loudly crowing in its cradle, and Walpurga said in a gentle voice:

"Look, our child is laughing! it is the first time to-day, it is exactly seven weeks old to-day."

"And I have seen the first smile of my child, and his father is not here."

"Don't make such a serious face," said Walpurga. "Go on laughing, and then he will laugh too, and all your pleasant looks will bide in his face."

The child went on smiling, till the physician begged them both not to excite him any more, adding that Walpurga was right, when a face often looks kindly at an infant, a sweet expression is stamped upon the tender features.

From this moment the child saw no sad look upon his mother's face.

Walpurga could only talk volubly and continuously

when she spoke of persons. Countess Irma was therefore very often the subject of conversation. This, however, too was soon exhausted, and when the queen then said: "Why do you not speak? I hear you can talk so well with the child, and carry on all sorts of fun with him;" then Walpurga remained persistently silent.

The queen made Walpurga tell her the whole history of her life. She had to ask many questions, for Walpurga could not go on talking in one breath, she had never before realized her life; it had all gone on in such a manner that she had had no occasion to think about it; and she was quite anxious in the matter, it seemed to her as if she were standing before a court of justice.

"How did you fall in with your husband? And do you love him heartily?"

"Yes indeed, he is my husband, and there is not a bad drop of blood in him. He is a little awkward, I mean clumsy, but only before people; he has not come much among others; he grew up in a lone house, and up to his two and twentieth year he had seen nothing but trees, which they cut down; but no work is too hard for him, and when they put him to it, he does the things rights. And he is not at all so stupid; on the contrary; but before the world, he doesn't let it out, with me alone he can talk right well, and it is enough for him that I know that he is a straight-forward man. It takes my Hansei long to consider a thing, but then he is always right in the end. Look here, my Lady Queen, I could have had a much shrewder one. My friend has a hunter, and a comrade of his hankered after me for a long time, but I would have nothing to do with him. He was a fellow who

was too much in love with himself. He once rowed with me over the lake, and he was for ever peeping in the water to see how he looked, and twisting his moustachios, and making faces, and then I thought, if you had on clothes of gold, I wouldn't have you.

"Now when father was drowned in the lake, Hansei was there, and he did everything in the house, and rowed the boat across the lake, and brought fish, and mother and I, we sold them, and then he was in the wood; father too was a wood-cutter and a fisher-man, and so for half a year Hansei was there, no one had bid him come, and no one had bid him go, but he was there, and he was upright and honest, and never said a rough word to me, and so we married, and thank God we are happy, and now through our dear prince we shall be rich too; we are so already. And it's no little matter for a man to give up his wife for a whole year. But my Hansei didn't make much ado about it; when anything is right and must be, he only nods his head so — a good nod — and then it's done. Forgive me, Lady Queen, for telling you all this stupid stuff, but you said you wish'd it."

"No, it delights me thoroughly that there are simple, happy people in the world. The worldly wise think themselves infinitely sage when they say: there are no simple happy people, and the country folk are not so honest as we imagine."

"No, that they are not," interrupted Walpurga vehemently, "there are no worse people then there are among us. Of course there are honest too, but there are wicked and envious, and thievish, and vicious, and depraved, and godless, there are all these, and

Zenza and Thomas they belong to the very worst, and I can't help it."

Walpurga imagined that the queen must know of the pardon, and they should not say of her that she had not spoken the truth.

The queen was grieved at the vehemence and the heavy accusations that Walpurga brought against the people of her home.

After a time she said to Walpurga:

"They tell me you can sing so beautifully; sing me a song — sing it to the child."

"No, Lady Queen, I can't do that; I'd do it of course gladly, but I can't, and I know nothing but silly songs, the better ones are all church songs."

"Sing me one of those which you call silly songs."

"No, I can't; they are songs for all alone."

"And what are then, songs for all alone?"

"I don't know, they call them so —"

"I understand — they are songs one can only sing when one is solitary and alone."

"Yes, yes, it must be so, the queen is right."

Much as the queen endeavoured to induce Walpurga to sing, she always protested that she could not, and at last she wept from excitement. The queen had difficulty in quieting her again; at length she succeeded, and Walpurga went with the child back to her room.

On the following day when Walpurga was again summoned to the queen, the latter said to her:

"You are right, Walpurga, you cannot sing to me. I have thought a great deal about you. The free bird on the branches does not sing at command. Free nature is not to be governed with a time stick. You

need not sing to me — I do not ask it of you any longer."

Walpurga had intended to sing to the queen today. — She had selected her prettiest songs; and now the queen actually ordered her not to sing and compared her to a bird.

They are wonderful people, she thought — people in palaces.

"I hear," continued the queen, "that among you they believe in the water nymph. Do you believe in her also?"

"Believe? I don't know, but they say so. And father has seen her, three days afore his death. And then it was certain that he would die. They say too that it is the lady of Waldeck."

"Who is then the lady of Waldeck?"

"She is the Lady of Wörth?"

"And what is Wörth?"

"A bit of land in the middle of the lake with water round it."

"An island then?"

"Yes, an island, they call it so too."

"And what is the story of the lady of Waldeck?"

"A great many thousand years ago, there was a man, and he was a knight named Waldeck. And he was a crusader. He went with many emperors and kings to the Holy Land — to the grave of our Saviour, and he left his wife at home and said to her: you are honest and you will remain true to me. And when he came home again after many years, burnt quite black by the sun in the east, he met his wife with another man. — And then he had the man and his wife bound together, and put in a boat and rowed across to

Wörth, and there he left them. And there they were with nothing to eat, and nothing to drink, and they were bound together, and they died of hunger there, and the birds of the air ate them. The right punishment happened to them, but still it's horrible, and now often in the night, a blue flame is seen on Wörth, and they say the soul of the Lady of Waldeck has passed into a water nymph, and she must wander about."

Such was Walpurga's story.

"I havn't made you shudder?" asked she anxiously, as she observed the queen's fixed look. — "They only tell it so."

"No, no, you need not be anxious," replied the queen. "Many things were passing through my mind."

"I can just think so with such a great housekeeping in the palace, with such lots of people; it must be difficult to be housewife here."

The queen laughed aloud.

Walpurga did not at all know what there was so merry and strange, but she submitted. So much however she remarked, that everything she said was ridiculed. There came over her a peculiar shyness, which suddenly gave way to violent fits of unrestraint; she exhibited various peculiarities, and these were always smiled at. The more the queen endeavoured to show herself simply natural, the more affected and forced did Walpurga gradually become; she imitated herself and her former harmless nature; the long string of words, which she had used in caressing the child, she now liked to bring forward when she knew she was heard by the queen; once even she began to sing of herself, and when she had finished, she looked to the queen, and was very much astonished and al-

most offended, that she said nothing at all. Had she then not sung beautifully?

But the queen did not venture to say any thing for fear of frightening away her unrestraint.

Thus there was a wonderful contrast between the two women. They were each endeavouring to bring their natures closer together, and in different ways they were sundering themselves from each other.

A great day came. — The queen drove out for the first time, and took with her Walpurga and the crown prince.

"Under the open sky you are a thousand times more beautiful. In the darkened rooms I didn't know how beautiful you were, Lady Queen," said Walpurga, and the queen spoke something in French to the lady of the chamber who was sitting at her side.

Then Walpurga said, "May I ask a favour, gracious queen?"

"Yes — certainly — only say it."

"I think it hurts the child when they talk a strange tongue before him. A young thing like that understands, though he can't say anything, and so I think his little brain gets confused. I don't know rightly how to say it, but I feel it in myself, I feel it in my head, and what I feel my child feels too."

"She is right," said the queen to the lady of the chamber. "Till a child can itself speak perfectly, it should hear no foreign sound, nothing but its mother-tongue."

"Yes, mother-tongue," cried Walpurga, "there, you have hit it! It was at the very point of my tongue, but I couldn't remember it. That is it! I am too —

one may almost say the mother of the child and therefore — isn't it so?"

"Yes, certainly, you shall have all your rights. — I beg you, dear Brinkenstein, to take care that nothing but German is spoken before the prince; no one can estimate what sounds sink into the soul while it is yet half slumbering."

Walpurga was happy. In her presence no more strange tongues would be spoken; for where the child was, there was she.

From Mademoiselle Kramer moreover, she received the pleasant news that during the course of the next few days they would remove to the country, that is, to the summer palace.

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Before however they set off for the summer palace, Walpurga and the prince were to be established in the possession of the capital.

It was a breakfast jest of Baron Schöning; but it was well received. The millions of people who would gladly have the happiness of seeing their future ruler, ought be contented by a glance, in the true sense of the word: the crown prince ought to be photographed, as the object of the people's affection, and Walpurga was the representative of the people. She set herself against the plan; it was not to be done, no child before it was a year old ought to be allowed to look in a looking glass or to have its portrait taken! As long as a child is not allowed to look in a looking glass, it can see itself in the palm of its left hand.

But in spite of her opposition, the matter was not allowed to rest, and so she put on her best gown, and the crown prince was beautifully dressed, the artist however took off his cap, for he had already fair curly hair.

Many times it was said that the picture had failed. Walpurga was frightened every time that she heard the announcement from the dark apartment — she was sure necromancy was going on in there.

She became more and more uneasy. At last however, — Schöning had cleverly devised this — a performer in the adjoining hall played the air of Walpurga's favourite song. As soon as the song struck up, she felt impelled to fall into the floating melody. Her glance grew cheerful and free, and the child too — Triumph! the picture had succeeded.

If the drives in the capital were beautiful, the most beautiful was now to come.

They left the palace, the whole court removed to the summer residence.

It was a beautiful bright afternoon when they drove there. It had not rained for a long time, but no dust lay on the whole three miles of road, for they had watered the distance in front of the royal carriages.

Walpurga went in an open carriage with the prince and the queen. She drove for the first time out through the villages and fields; she saw the people looking out from their windows in the houses, or standing in front of their doors, she saw the children who stood still and hurraed, and further out in the fields those who were at work there. She kept smiling, winking, and nodding, on all sides.

The queen inquired: "What is the matter, what are you doing?"

"Oh! me, pardon me, Lady Queen, here am I, riding in a carriage and four, and there are the like of me at work, full of care and trouble, and I know how the women's backs must ache from the potatoe loads, and here am I riding by, as if I was something particular. And it feels as if I ought to beg the people's pardon, for riding past them, and I think I ought to say to them: only be quiet, come a year, and I shall be like you again, and the clothes which I have on, and the carriage and the horses, none of it is mine, it's all only lent me! Oh Lady Queen, forgive me, that I chatter on so about it all to you, you understand it, and you know how to interpret it all to good. I open my whole heart to you," ended Walpurga smiling.

"Yes, I understand you," replied the queen, "and it is sensible of you to look forwards to your simple life with unaltered feelings. It always vexed me when I thought that you would never again be happy at home. Believe me, we, who sit in carriages, are not better off than those yonder who are walking barefoot through the stubble fields."

"I know that," said Walpurga, "no one can eat himself more than full, as father used to say, and queens must bear their own children, and bring forth with sorrow; no one can take that from them."

The queen was silent, and looked out of the other side of the carriage.

The mistress of the chamber signed to Walpurga, that she should leave off talking. For so it was: Walpurga was not easily led to speak; but once she had

got into it, she could not leave off, but rolled on in a continuous flow like a torrent.

The queen, however, had only been silent, because she had felt inclined to say something in French to the mistress of the chamber, and had refrained from doing so on account of the previous admonition.

"Dear child," at length began the queen again, "if I knew that I could make every one happy and contented, I would gladly lay aside everything, and have nothing to elevate me above them. But what use would it be? People are not to be helped by money, and it is not we human beings who have made the inequality that is in the world. It is God's decree."

Walpurga would have had something to say to this, but something must be left for the morrow, and "it isn't well to catch all the fish on one day," had been a constant saying of her father's. She was silent.

It was a heavy restraint on the queen, that she had promised not to speak French before Walpurga. She had many things to say, in which the peasant woman had no concern.

"How great and beautiful the world is!" said she half aloud to herself; then she closed her eyes as if weary of all the vast magnificence, which again opened before her after her long seclusion, and as she lay there, her head reclining on the cushions, she looked like some slumbering angel, so peaceful, so tender, mother and child in one countenance.

"I could have fancied on the cushions there, that I was sitting on soft clouds," said Walpurga, when they reached their destination.

She was unspeakably happy in the country. The view there was so extensive, sky and mountains, and

the beautiful large garden, and good seats every where, and the fountains, and the swans, and a quarter of a mile distant a splendid dairy, with cows which were kept in a stall, more beautiful than the host of the chamois' ball-room.

Walpurga sat almost the whole day with the queen in the open air, the queen lived only for her child, and Walpurga was simple and talkative; the whole affectation, to which she had almost become accustomed in the capital, was again all at once leaving her.

In her first letter home, — she could now write herself — she wrote:

"If I only had you but for one day, to tell you about everything. For if the sky were nothing but paper, and our lake nothing but ink, I could not describe it all. If only it wasn't so far off, Hansei, a pound of fish costs here double as much as with us. We are now living in the summer palace. And only think, mother, what such a king has. He has seven palaces, and they are all fitted up, all with a hundred beds ready prepared, rooms and kitchens, every where quite full, and when they go from one palace to another, they have no need to take with them even a fork or a spoon, and every thing here is of silver, and the doctor and the apothecary and the priest and the court people, and the horses and the carriages, every thing is taken with us, a whole town is with us in the palace. And I have the best beer, more than I want. And when one gets up in the morning, every thing is like an egg ready shelled, not a leaf lies on the paths, and there is a house besides which is all of glass, and inside it live the flowers, but I may not go in, because it is too hot in there, it is heated the whole year

through, and there are in it nothing but great palms, and trees from the east.

"And in the pond here, they have a spring, and the water rises up to the sky, just as high as a church tower, and only think, what such a king can have! There is a rainbow there the whole day when the sun shines, sometimes above, sometimes below. The sun certainly, — he can't make that, and no one can. — And all the people do what they can to please me; I never dare say, that a thing pleases me, or I get it at once.

"The queen is like a companion with me, just like you, Stasi; I wish you much happiness at your wedding, I only heard of it from Zenza. You shall get something for your house from me. Say what you wish for. But now I beg you to tell me right regularly how my child is; that you have had it weighed on the butcher's weights, and that it is so heavy, hasn't pleased me; I hadn't thought that of you, mother, that you would have suffered it, nor of you, Hansei, that you would have given way to the host of the chamois. Be on your guard with that man, — I dreamt last night that you were going over the lake with him, and that he seized you and pulled you in, and then there was nothing for a bit, and then the water-nymph appear'd, but she looked like the good countess now away. She is my best friend here, and she has promised me to visit you on the way back; you could tell her and give her everything, it's just as if it was I myself. My dinner has just come. — Ah! dear mother, if I could only give you some of it. There are so many good bits here, and there is always so much left. Don't let yourself want for anything, and don't let

Hansei either, and my child, not at all; we have it now, thank God, and I would keep you long, mother.

"It often makes me sad that I cannot be a mother too, I mean a true mother, but I will when I come back again; I will make it all up to my child.

"And Hansei — put the money all out at interest till I come back again; remember it doesn't belong to us, it belongs to our child, whom we deprived of its mother.

"Mamsell Kramer, who is with me the whole day, was born here, but she likes better being in the town than here, and she says, it used to be much more beautiful here, that it all used to be as it is in the little garden yonder, there are walls made out of nothing but garden trees, and there are rooms and little chambers with doors and windows; it's beautiful indeed and I like to go there, but when I have been there a couple of minutes, I get a sort of fear; I fancy I have been bewitched, and that the trees are bewitched, and I manage soon to get out again. — Mamsell Kramer is a good person, but nothing is quite to her taste. She has always been accustomed to the driving and eating, and sitting about, and only think, mother, what I have eaten here! Real ice — people here are so clever that they can keep ice and make it up so that it may be eaten. Yes, if that were for hunger, there would be no hungry people with us in the winter, nor in the summer either up there in the mountains. And mother, you once told me a tale where the walls had ears, but that's no tale; it's quite true, it is so. But it all comes to pass, quite naturally, through the whole palace there run nothing but speaking trumpets, and there we can speak to each other and say everything, and when I

wish for something in my room, I only go to the wall and say it, and in a minute it's there.

"To-day is a beautiful day, and when I see it so, I always think: Yes, and you are having the day too, the same sun is shining also with you.

"The main business here is going out walking. Everyone here must go out, they call it taking exercise, so that one may be able to eat well, and that our limbs may not grow stiff. The horses too are taken out walking, when they have nothing else to do; early in the morning the grooms ride out a long way with them, and then come home. I have often thought, if only the horses could now take me home for an hour! I still often feel homesick, but I am cheerful and strong, and only wish that it may be the same with you. YOUR WALPURGA."

Postscript. "Why do you write me nothing about the little gold heart on the silk chain, which my countess sent to my Burgei? And no one must send me any more petitions, and no one must come to me again, I will receive nothing more. So long as I have an eye to look through, I shall repent the affair with Zenza and Thomas, but perhaps it is all as well, and he has become honest. I beg you again, dear Hansei, but don't take it amiss from me, not to meddle too much with the host of the chamois, he is a rogue and a misleader. But you needn't tell him that I have written this, I don't want to have any man as an enemy. Remember me to all good friends. I cannot write more, my hand is quite stiff with writing.

"Stop — I must say something more. I send you

the picture of me and my prince, we were taken in a sort of peep-show before we came here.

"Now, so long the world exists, here am I painted with my prince, we are always together and I am holding him in my arms. But I am still with you all, with you, dear Hansei, and with you, dear mother, and most of all with my child, I bear it in my heart where no one sees. Don't show the picture to any one.

"Ah me! what will it help if you don't show the picture. Mamsell Kramer tells me that a hundred thousand pictures have been made of me and my prince and now I hang up in all the shops, and wherever I come they know me just as well as the queen and the king who hang by the side, I feel as if I could never let myself be seen again; but when I rightly consider it, it is really an honour, I am now out in the world, and I must let them do with me what they please.

"But I remain true to you all, and am nowhere at home but with you, and I am always with you in thought."

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

"How are you, Walpurga," asked the lacquey Baum, as the nurse was looking out of the window on the ground floor.

"Oh dear me," she replied; "it's a real paradise here."

"Do you think so?"

"Do you think it could be more beautiful in paradise. They live so carelessly, and people have nothing

more to do than to eat and to drink and to laugh, and to go out walking."

"You are right there, but still it was more beautiful in paradise, father Adam there had no other wife he could desire, there was only but one in the whole world."

"What fancies you have got in your head," laughed Walpurga, and Baum continued in a coaxing tone:

"In paradise there were no servants wanted, no coachman, and no cook, and no house, and no clothes, and there were no boots to clean because no one wore any, and no coat and no shirt to weave and to sew and to arrange."

"You wild creature!" cried Walpurga; she felt as if Baum's words almost took the clothes off her back. Her face grew fiery red.

"I am sorry that I am so wild in your eyes, in my eyes you are so beautiful that I —"

He was interrupted in the middle of his speech; another servant called him away.

Walpurga drew quickly back into the room. She was angry with Baum. Might one then use such language to a married woman? and still she smiled to herself and said: "But he is a mannerly fellow, Baum; and why shouldn't one be allowed to make a joke?"

She looked towards the large mirror, she saw herself only for a moment and smiled.

"Yes, if Hansei were to see thee again, he'd hardly know thee. It's the good living does that. But I'll say to myself every day: It won't last long, thou art only lent for a bit. But though the dance doesn't last long, it's very beautiful dancing," said

Walpurga consolingly. All sorts of dancing melodies occurred to her, and she kept humming them to her prince.

Walpurga walked about the beautiful park as if in a dream; she thought that they must be other trees, other sky, other birds, that they must be all somewhere else, enchanted into another world, and that suddenly they would wake up and all would be gone. But every thing went on its quiet course, every day was newly beautiful, for the sun rose every day anew, and the fragrance of the flowers ever streamed forth anew, and the source of the fountain never fails.

Walpurga took a special delight in the old keeper of the castle, the father of Mademoiselle Kramer; he was a venerable man, and he had beautiful flowers in his little lodge, and she could talk with him as with her father.

Walpurga sat almost the whole day in the open air, with Mademoiselle Kramer, and two servants not far off. The queen too was often present with her.

The queen had a beautiful snow-white setter in which the child seemed to take especial delight; Walpurga begged that the dog might be often left with the prince, because a living animal is so good for a child.

"She is right," said the queen to the court lady sitting beside her, "animal life awakens human consciousness."

Walpurga looked amazed at her; the queen had agreed with her, and yet had added something which she did not understand.

"Look," she called to the queen, "how the bees

like our child;" they do nothing to him, there is no need to have any fear. The bee is the only creature that has come unchanged from paradise, so they say of bees that they die, and of other animals that they perish; and no one may kill a bee."

The queen shewed especial delight in this idea of Walpurga's interwoven as it was with tradition.

Walpurga observed that the queen knew very little of the world, and she now gave vent to her wisdom whenever she could.

"Do you know what that is," she once asked, as they sat in a shrubbery.

"A hazel tree."

"Yes, but do you know that it is sacred, and where it grows no lightning can strike?"

"No, I did not know that."

"And then you don't know, why? my mother has told me about it. The mother of God was once going over a mountain, and a tremendous storm came on, and she stood under a great large hazel tree, and remained safe — and because the hazel tree had so protected her, she gave it this blessing for endless time. — From a hazel tree, one can also make magic wands, and under a hazel tree the serpent king dwells; they say there are some too under a weeping willow. Do you know too why the weeping willow lets its branches hang so sadly?"

"No, I don't know that either. You are most learned," laughed the queen.

"Not I — but my mother — I don't know half so much as she, she's very clever. I know too about the weeping willow from her. It was from the weep-

ing willow that the rods were made which our Saviour was scourged with, and from that time it has been ashamed and hung down its branches."

Walpurga was very happy that she could teach the queen anything; she had a feeling as if she was something quite peculiar in the palace, and no one understood her so well, and listened to her so attentively, as the queen; she was always happy and cheerful with her, and she ventured to open to her her whole heart.

"I think," she said one day to the queen, "I think you are really strange in the world, in all your life you have never seen how citizens and peasants sit of an evening in their room, what they eat, what they say, what they desire, what gives them pleasure, and what gives them pain. I once read a story, or father told it me; there was a prince and a princess, and they grew up among shepherds and never dreamt who they were till they were grown up, and then they said to him, 'thou art a prince,' and to her, 'thou art a princess,' and they were right honest and upright people. — Of course! they had been out in the world, and had learnt how men live and what they want. I only wish we could send our prince out like that. I think it would be good for him and for the whole country. When one is always so followed by servants, one has a sort of imprisoned feeling the whole day, living people are always like walls around one."

"We can all be honest and good," replied the queen.

"And make honest people of our children," concluded Walpurga. — "Do you know what I should like? I should like all my life to be able to take all trouble

from you. If you must be sick some day, I should like to be sick for you."

"Yes — well — but now let us be quiet."

The queen was full of happiness.

She saw to the very bottom of a simple peasant's heart, and she saw a new world open in her child.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Baum knew how to watch for every moment to speak with Walpurga. He was now in deep affliction, his wife lay seriously ill, and Walpurga endeavoured to console him. In return for this, Baum was ready to listen to all her lamentations; for she had heard from home, that Zenza would know nothing of the golden heart which Countess Irma had sent the child.

"Indeed, and so your Countess had a golden heart too to give away," said Baum jeeringly, "you may be glad that you have such a friend.

"Yes, so I am. Oh! if she were only here again, then it would really be paradise. I don't trouble much about it that Zenza has made away with the gold heart; there must be bad people too, or the world would be too beautiful."

"And I tell you, it's only half the life when the king isn't here. Be it as it then may, it is then thoroughly delightful. Where there is no man in the house, it's no complete house."

The queen approached, and Baum drew back. —

"What was that man saying to you," asked the queen.

"We were telling our troubles to each other. He has great longing for the king, and I, dear Lady Queen, have a great longing for my Countess Irma."

"I too desire her heartily, but she has begged for fourteen days more leave of absence."

In uniform quiet the days passed by. Walpurga's favorite haunt was in the neighbourhood of the dairy; there were cows too there, and they are the same every where, and know nothing of the fact that they belong to the king, and send their milk to his table.

Walpurga said this one day to Baum, who used to meet her here, and he replied:

"Oh! how clever you are. Aye! if I had had a wife like you, —

"Like me? — there are dozens to be had." —

"No — not so thoroughly clever — you could carry it a great way if you wished." —

"How far should I carry it?" asked Walpurga. "I want home and nothing else."

"No one would take that amiss of you; but one can make oneself a new home."

"I don't understand you."

"And I can't explain it to you just now. Yonder comes the mistress of the chamber. Come this evening, while all are at table, into the shrubbery behind the chapel, I have something good to tell you."

Walpurga had no time to reply; as the lady of the chamber approached, Baum gave the dairy inspector a loud order from the master of the household, then he went quickly away, respectfully saluting the mistress of the chamber as he passed.

The mistress of the chamber reproved Mademoiselle Kramer severely for having allowed Walpurga to stand there with the Prince, and to chatter with the servants.

Mademoiselle Kramer made no reply, and only beckoned Walpurga into the vine-covered shrubbery.

Walpurga turned over in her mind what advice Baum had to give her. He is acquainted with the world, she thought, and he perhaps knows some scheme by which Hansei, mother, and the child may be brought here, but no lacquey could ever be made out of Hansei. They could make him perhaps court fisherman or wood cutter in the Royal forest.

She was full of uneasiness in the evening. It wasn't fitting that she should have a secret meeting with another man. But perhaps the place might be given away to-morrow. The opportunity might have slipped by. She sat at the window and looked up at the stars. Her cheeks glowed, she drew a deep breath.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Mademoiselle Kramer.

"I feel it so sultry and heavy."

"I will send for the doctor."

"I want no doctor. Let me only sit here quietly, or no, let me go up and down in the garden for a couple of minutes, and then I shall be better."

"The maid shall accompany you."

"No, I want no one; I shall be better if I go alone."

"But pray don't go too far and come back soon; you have seen to-day how every fault of yours draws down reproof upon me."

"Yes, I will soon be back again."

Walpurga went out at the back door. The gravel grated under her footstep. She trod more gently.

The flowers were sweetly fragrant, the swans on the lake gave forth a strange sound like a deep muffled trumpet tone; and in the sky above glittered countless stars, and far away in the brilliant arch of heaven, there dropt a falling star, and Walpurga suddenly exclaimed "Hansei."

In her innermost soul she wished for nothing but good luck for her husband. She stood still. When she had called the name she wished to turn back again; she was a married woman, she ought not to meet any strange man in the evening, and it was by the chapel too.

Something sprang across the road; was it a cat, a martin or a weasel?

You ought to turn back, something said in Walpurga, and still she went on. She came into the shrubbery. Baum stepped forward from behind a pillar grown over with vine tendrils. He held out both hands to her, and she offered him her own; he would have drawn her closer to him, but she stood firm.

"What have you to say to me," asked Walpurga.

"Say 'du' to me, as I do to you," said Baum.

"Well then, only tell me, what have you to say to me?"

"Only good things! Look here, we lesser people, we must help each other, and you are so much to me, that I could give everything to you."

"If you can give me any good thing, I shall be thankful to you all my life, I and my husband, and my child. Speak quickly, I am in a hurry!"

"Then we can leave it for another time."

"No, say now, what did you mean?"

"I really meant nothing. Look here, we have always got to serve, we have always to be here for others, and I thought, we might just for once have a quarter of an hour for ourselves. I wanted to tell you once for all, that you are the delight of my eyes, my happiness: when I see and hear you, I should like to do I don't know what, and I can't tell it."

"It isn't necessary either. And I can tell you that it is base of you."

"That I love you to madness, is that base?"

"Yes and doubly base, that you have brought me here, and deceived me into thinking, you had something good to say to me."

"I have something too," interrupted Baum quickly. "Forgive me, that I have been like this. If you forgive me, then I will tell you the other thing."

"Yes, I will forgive you, but now make haste."

"Well," began Baum with great composure," the matter is this: he who stands by the manger, and doesn't eat, is a fool; do you understand me?"

"Yes indeed. But I don't know, what there is in it to understand?"

"Yes, you don't understand, how I mean. Here at the court is the full manger, you are now standing by it, and when you go away and have not taken so much as to satisfy you, that is, you and your child, for your whole life, you have been a fool."

"I should like to know how that is to be done. One eats afresh every day, one can't stuff oneself full at once for one's whole life."

"You are clever, but you might be more so. Look here, I mean it in this way: in a good post, a profitable place, there one eats oneself satisfied for one's life Next

spring the bailiff is going to leave the farm yonder; at the longest he won't be there beyond next autumn, and then I think you might manage with the queen and with all, that your husband might be bailiff, and you would remain there all your life, and be well taken care of yourself and your belongings.

"Believe me, I know what people of quality are. If you go away and have not got a good berth for yourself, not a cat will think any more about you: but if you remain there, you will be prosperous all your life, and the older the prince gets, the more he will think of you, and when he is king some day, he will take care of you and your people and your child and your child's child. Is this a base thing now, which I am advising you?"

"No, on the contrary, it is something quite good; I will pay attention to that, that would be a fine loaf with butter enough to boot."

"Oh! what sense you have. I have never seen and heard a woman like you. You deserve to have had a very different lot. But so it is, and if you remain here, I shall have the delight of seeing you often and of speaking a word with you, and we may be good friends, may we not?"

"Yes indeed, and my Hansei will be a good friend to you too, there isn't a drop of falsity in him, and he is clever too, only he can't come out so with his words; and he holds me just as dear as I do him, and he is a good-hearted man and true, and I will have nothing said against him."

"I have not done so," said Baum, and Walpurga was obliged to allow it; but still she felt that any proposal of love to a wife is an offence and degradation

to the man she has wedded; for it cannot be, but that silently or expressly it is notified: he was not the right man, he lacks this and that, I was really the right one, who is worthy of thee.

Baum sighed heavily and said:

"Oh! if one could only make life double!"

"I think one has enough with one."

"Certainly, when one hasn't played it away . . . one has only one life."

"Yes, in this world; but in the other it begins again afresh."

"I mean in this world. Look here; it is hard, when one has played away all one's life, when one has blundered it so, and one doesn't know how and why. Must one bear it and not change it? We have both blundered it so."

"Who?"

"When I was a soldier, I got acquainted with the late king's valet; he took pleasure in me, and pushed me on and on, he knew why. I thought, wondering what sort of success I should have, that I would marry his daughter; I perceived too late that she was a sickly, cross person, who hadn't a drop of good blood in her body. Am I now to have played away my life, and not to have any more love on earth, because I have been so unfortunate? And you too. You and I, we two — but why should it be too late now?"

"You are making pretty jokes, but they are not pretty; one mustn't make jokes about such things."

"I am not joking. Is all joy on earth to be lost, just because we have been stupid? We should then be doubly fools."

"I see, you are speaking in earnest."

"Yes, indeed," said Baum; and his voice trembled.

"Well; then I will say something to you. How is it you can insult my Hansei? If it were so, but it is not so — but if it were so, what do you mean? If you were handsomer or more mannerly — but you are not so, and I tell you so plainly, — but for my own part that doesn't concern me a bit; a more honest man than my Hansei there isn't, and if there were, he wouldn't concern me; we have each other, and we belong to each other. There, you have been only joking? A silly joke indeed. There, say that you only wanted to joke. I can't otherwise even speak to you again. And now good-night!"

"No, remain one moment. It now pleases me that you are so honest. If I too had such a wife!"

Baum was in a state of violent excitement. He had at first only played with the good words, but by degrees his voice had assumed an agitated tone, that spoke to the heart.

"I will give you something," said Walpurga, laying her hand on his shoulder.

"What then? a kiss?"

"Go along, don't talk so; you have been so proper now. No, I'll give you something from my mother. She always says: 'He who isn't contented with what he has, wouldn't be contented with what he would like to have.'"

"And you have that from your mother?"

"Yes, and she has many other good sayings; and it pleases me that you can care for this one. You'll see it will be good for you."

"Yes, certainly! But now give me just one single kiss, because I am so good."

"You're a foolish fellow," laughed Walpurga. "You will now be good, and you directly want something bad in return. And if you were to give me the whole palace, with all that's in it, and seven castles besides, I'm a married woman, and I will give no other man a kiss. I will give you my hand — there, and now good-night."

With a promise that they would remain good friends, they separated.

Walpurga found Mademoiselle Kramer full of uneasiness, for the child was crying and screaming. It was only Walpurga's singing which quieted it.

Meanwhile Baum returned back to the palace. He bit his lips, and thought within himself — it's a simple rotten thing, such a peasant woman. But she is beautiful. I can wait. I know the long way. She shall be tamed.

For many days Walpurga went past Baum without looking up; Baum too seemed shy. But at last, when he one day met her again on the seat, he said quickly as he passed by:

"You have no need to be angry with me. I didn't know that I had offended you; but if I have done so, you must forgive me."

Walpurga looked up openly. Baum nodded, and went quickly on.

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The king had returned from the baths; he was splendidly received, but he soon withdrew with his wife, and went with her into the apartments of the crownprince. The parents stood by the cradle of the sleeping child, holding each other's hands, and looking at each other, and again on the child.

"Is there anything more elevating than thus to fix our joint gaze upon the babe given to us?" whispered the queen softly.

The king embraced her.

The child woke; his cheeks glowed, and his eyes were bright.

Walpurga sat during all this in a corner, weeping silently. She had now to go to the child; the king left, the queen remained with her.

"You have been weeping?" asked the queen.

"Only out of joy — out of nothing but hearty joy. Could there be anything more beautiful than as you stood there together?"

"I will have your husband come and see you," replied the queen. "Write and tell him he must come. And your child and your mother can come with him."

"Yes, Lady Queen, that would be beautiful indeed; but that costs a lot of money."

The queen looked up surprised that any one should have to deny himself such a pleasure because it costs money. She said:

"You shall have from the treasurer as much as the

journey would cost your people. Is a hundred guldens enough?"

"Oh! more than enough; but if the Queen will give me the money, we could make better use of it."

The queen looked astonished at Walpurga — the inordinate love of money was destroying the deepest emotions in that simple heart.

Walpurga observed that the expression of happiness on the queen's face had vanished, and she began:

"I will honestly say why I do not wish it, even if it cost nothing. My Lady Queen, my husband is an honest man, but he is just a little bit ungain, and it would vex me to the very heart if any one here made a laughing-stock of him. And my mother, Lady Queen, one couldn't put it upon her. She is now over sixty, and since her marriage she has never gone out of the place — not further than a couple of times to Hohenheiligen on a pilgrimage, and that's three miles from us; only once since then has she gone home from where she came from — a day's journey from us on the other side of the lake. And so I think we might do harm to mother if we forced her to move anywhere, only for a couple of days. The best thing would be, if it could be so managed, that we should remain in the neighbourhood of the queen altogether; we would certainly take good care of the farm, and my husband understands cattle well; he was for many years cowboy and afterwards herdsman on the Alm."

Walpurga spoke as if the queen must already know of the place, but the queen did not hear what she said; she was quite absorbed in the consciousness of her newly-awakened domestic happiness.

Days passed away, and Walpurga heard nothing of

the travelling money which the queen had promised her, and she did not venture to speak to the court treasurer about it. She wished to give Baum a token that she was friendly with him, and so she told him the proceeding.

"It is better," he said, putting on a prudent air, "that you shouldn't take so small a present. They would then think that they had done with you. Always go upon the main matter — that is the farm."

Walpurga was heartily thankful to Baum. It was really very good, she thought, to have such a friend in the palace; he had been with the king while he was still prince both in Italy and France; he knew how one ought to deal with such high folk.

It was no longer so quiet in the palace as in the last few weeks. From morning till evening there was a hustle and bustle, and far into the night there was laughing, singing, and jesting; variegated lamps hung from the trees, and far out in the plain, and seen from the mountains, the summer residence glimmered like a magic palace.

Early in the morning, waggons of provisions drove here and there; to-day they were dining on some rising ground in the forest, to-morrow in the depths of some valley, or by a waterfall.

Nothing of all the noise was heard in the apartments which Walpurga occupied with Mademoiselle Kramer; it was only said — "to-day they are all gone out again."

The king was full of tender attention towards his consort, and the queen never appeared more beautiful than now, elevated as she was by maternal happiness and conjugal affection. Often of a morning when the

day was still fresh, and of an evening when the soft dew was falling, the king might be seen without any attendant sauntering in the park with his wife on his arm, the court then remaining in the neighbourhood of the palace.

One evening when the king was wandering along, talking familiarly with his wife, the queen said:

"To be leaning thus on your arm is a true delight to me; to close my eyes and to be led by you, you can't think what good it does me."

The king expressed his happiness at this devotion, but something deep within him shrunk from it, and called this sensibility unqueenly. How different would be —

No — he would not think that. —

The queen talked much of the gradual dawning of sense in the prince, the king listened attentively, but his attention was rather that of courtesy. After the first few weeks, the queen withdrew from the many excursions and remained in the palace; she had no real pleasure in the general commotion.

The queen made Walpurga bring the child sometimes here, sometimes there in the park, and on the rising ground behind the palace, while she drew groups of trees, the lake with the swans, and the scenery round it, the palace, the chapel, and several distant views.

One morning they were sitting in the summer-house at breakfast, and the king said:

"That emulation between you and the countess was charming, when you drew together. Your two natures were thoroughly exhibited in the manner in which you depicted the same subjects."

"Yes, we often remarked that; I perhaps draw the details more accurately and sharply, but countess Irma has more freedom in the whole sketch. I miss the good countess very much."

"Then let us write to her and tell her she must come back, and that forthwith. We will send her a joint letter. My lords and ladies, we will now write a letter to countess Irma!"

"Order the writing materials to be brought," he called to a gentleman of the bedchamber. They were soon there and the king wrote:

"Sweet countess, fugitive bird! at last I know what bird you are: a wild dove; does this contradiction answer to you? wild, and yet a dove?—Come, the whole flock of your companions in the wood hang their heads till you come back again. Haste to us on the wings of song."

The king held out the paper to the queen, and said: "Now do you write."

"I cannot write when any one is present," replied the queen. "I could not bring out a word. I will write her a special little letter."

A quick and scarcely perceptible expression of ill-humour passed over the king's countenance; he mastered it.

"As you will," he said in a courteous tone; but in his heart he was thoroughly annoyed at this everlasting sensitiveness.

All the gentlemen and ladies of the court wrote, every one a few lines, every one a passing jest.

The lady of the chamber, however, had slipped away.

Amid much laughing and jesting the whole sheet had been filled, and now the king said:

"The chief person is still missing, Walpurga also must write to the countess. It is the voice of the people which has the most influence over her. Order Walpurga to come here!"

Baum was immediately despatched for Walpurga.

On the way, he explained to her what was going on. —

Walpurga was not at all shy in the midst of the assembled court.

"Would you rather write alone in your room," asked the king, casting a sort of irritated look towards his wife.

"I write wherever it is wished, but I can't write beautifully."

Walpurga sat down and wrote:

"If your noble father allows it, it will right rejoice me, when my Countess Irma is here again. My heart is full of longing for you.

WALPURGA ANDERMATTEN."

The king read it and said:

"Write also down here: "It will be good for me and the prince to have you here again; you make us both happier."

"My Lord King," said Walpurga. "But you are so clever! It is quite true what you say there. Now do me the favour, and dictate it to me, I can't put it so well, but I can write from dictation very well, I learnt it with Mamsell Kramer, I learnt too before in the school, but I had forgotten it again."

"No," replied the king, "only write what comes into your mind. My ladies and gentlemen, let us leave Walpurga alone, and we will go to the verandah."

Walpurga sat alone in the great breakfast hall, biting her pen, she could no longer remember the words. Presently she heard a rustle, she looked round, Baum was standing at the door.

"Come here," she cried, "you can help me, you heard it all?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Baum, and he dictated the king's words to Walpurga. She went out and gave the letter to the king.

He praised her for having put the words so well. She intended to say that Baum had helped her, but one mustn't tell everything, and why shouldn't one receive praise for something, which really might have been so.

Walpurga smiled at her own wisdom, as she went back to her room. The king would certainly give her the farm. He had seen that she could write well, and was up to bookkeeping.

The queen brought her quickly written note into the garden, it was yet unsealed, she gave it to the king and said: "Will you read it?"

"It is not necessary," said the king, and he fastened it down.

After the letter was written, there was endless tittering among the court ladies; they chirped and chattered together, and rallied each other, and hopped about like a flock of sparrows that have just discoverd an open sack of corn. They soon dispersed, and ladies who otherwise could not endure each other were now good friends and went arm in arm up

and down the park, and others stood together, they could not separate on this morning, they had so much to say to each other; they were still all speaking well of Irma, she was still their best friend; but it was evident that a very little would overturn this.

In a few days the whole tone of life was changed in the summer-palace. The king and queen had greeted each other on meeting, as if they were newly married, they were happy beyond compare; but soon again, or rather it was now for the first time plainly manifest, there appeared a spirit of impatience which was in truth to be explained by the fact, that the queen was — wearisome to her husband. — He justly estimated her elevated and noble nature, her every word and thought was the effusion of the purest feeling; but this elevation which in daily life has always something peculiar in it that cannot be competed with, this endeavour to analyse in the profoundest manner every circumstance, this ever requiring attention to each particular mood of feeling, nothing of a light, playful, sportive nature; this solemn stillness of character, this everlasting enthronement on the heights; all this was very beautiful, and at times agreeable also, but in such uninterrupted continuance, it became irksome to the king; the queen had no sparkling sallies or short-lived pleasantries which cheer for a moment.

But the king loved variety, he liked a playful nature, the jesting, the enigmatical, and the whimsical, he liked conquest over difficulties.

And what he missed in the queen, he found in the remembrance of Irma. It is true he was conscious of loving his wife truly; but he honored Irma's free,

beautiful nature, and why should he not delight in intercourse with her?

She will come. She will remain with us, she will bring new fresh life! he thought as he saw the courier, who was entrusted with a letter to Irma, ride along the high road at a brisk trot.

At noon the king drove out with the queen quite alone; he himself drove and sat beside her, two grooms following behind.

The king was excessively affectionate, and the queen was happy. The king was inwardly conscious of a slight estrangement, and was now doubly loving. He looked brightly into the beaming eyes of his beautiful wife.

It ought ever to be so, thou ought always to be able to look into those eyes as purely and as freely.

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Your Majesty," said the lady of the chamber on the following morning as they sauntered after breakfast in the park, "your Majesty, I owe you some explanation for not having put my name to the letter addressed to the maid of honor of her Majesty the queen."

"You did not?" replied the king. The stiff refined countenance of the old lady exhibited no change at these words; and yet it might have wounded her that her missing signature had not been remarked. But she followed above all the supreme law of the court, namely, to renounce all personal feeling and thus to

avoid all sensitiveness; so she continued quietly turning the blame into praise after court fashion:

"This invitation is an ingenious fancy and favor of your Majesty, but the jest must ever stand alone. Your Majesty will permit me as your motherly friend, with which high title you have often honored me, to observe, that it does not become either the gentlemen or the ladies to put their names to an extraordinary jest of your Majesty. Those around us must not have occasion given to them to charge your Majesty's noble feeling with the supposition, that this appeal, because so open and loud, is, in reality, a silent secret."

The king looked confounded at the mistress of the bedchamber; but he behaved as if he did not perceive that she had seen through the mask. —

"I repeat to you, my Lady, you ought also to have travelled to the baths, you look at every thing too gravely, in too important an aspect; but where one, like me, has just come from the baths, every thing is light and free as air."

"Your Majesty, it belongs to my office, to lay especial weight on the fixed rules that govern your Majesty's high position."

"Don't you do that too much?"

"Your Majesty, etiquette is the invisible, but none the less important treasure of the crown: artistic and great historical treasures may not be melted down for new coin, they must be carefully preserved from century to century. The palace is the highest point in the land, where one is open to the eye of all, and one must so live that one can be seen."

The king only carelessly listened to this explanation, his mind had wandered to Irma who was now receiving his letter. She is awake, thought he, she is standing alone or sitting beside the misanthropical old man on the balcony of the mountain castle. The letter arrives, and she is surrounded as it were by a flock of twittering and singing birds who sit upon her hands, shoulders, and head. It is a pity that one can't see her lovely smile . . . . .

The king had seen aright. Irma was sitting with her father looking dreamily out into the distance. What was to become of her? If only her father would command her: Thou must stay here. But always to decide for herself! If only she had a husband to order her! But Baron Schöning would be her subject, and she would have the double weight of life. At this moment the housekeeper announced a messenger on horseback who had just arrived.

The courier entered, delivered the letter, and said he was to wait for an answer. Irma read it and laughed aloud. She laid down the letter on her lap, took it up again, read it and laughed again. Her father looked at her, with surprise.

"What is it? what is the matter?"

"Read it."

Her father read. His expression never altered.

"And what will you do now?" he asked.

"I think I must obey such a request, indeed, I must. But can I come back without being reproached by you?"

"If you bring no reproach in your own heart, always."

Irma rang and ordered the housekeeper to tell her

maid that she was to arrange everything for her departure; she ordered them to treat the courier hospitably, and to tell him, that by the evening she would be on her journey.

"Are you angry with me, father?"

"I am never angry. I only regret that so few people allow themselves to be governed by their reason. But, my child, be quiet. If this decision is suggested by your reason, you must obey it. Only bear all the consequences calmly as I bear them. Let us now spend the few hours together in peace and quiet. The present hour is life."

Irma gave her maid and the courier many directions, but it always seemed to her as if she were forgetting something, and leaving behind her what would only occur to her when she was gone.

Father and daughter sat together at their midday meal in affectionate intercourse. The carriage was packed with luggage, and then sent forward to await them in the valley. The father accompanied Irma down the mountain; he spoke cheerfully with her; pausing by an apple-tree on the way, he said:

"My child, let us bid farewell here. This is the tree which I planted on the day of your birth, it is often the limit of my evening walk."

They stood still. An apple fell from the tree on the grass at their feet. The father took it up, and gave it to his daughter.

"Take this fruit with you from your native soil. See the apple fell from the tree because it was ripe — because the tree could give it nothing more. The human being does the same with his home and family. But the human being is more than the fruit of a tree.

Now, my child, take off your hat, let me once more take in your whole head. No one knows when his hour comes. So, my child, I hold your dear head, weep not, or weep on. — I wish that throughout your life you may only have to weep over others, and never over yourself."

He stopped; then recovering himself, he continued:

"And as I now hold your head and would like to lay my hand upon all your thoughts, oh remain ever faithful to yourself. I should like to give you all my thoughts; keep now only this one: participate only in such pleasures as can give you pleasure in the remembrance of them. Remember that. Take this kiss —— you kiss passionately — may you never give one kiss in which your heart is not as pure and full as it is now. Farewell!"

Her father turned away and went up the mountain. He did not look round again.

Irma looked after him. She trembled, she felt uneasy, she wished to turn back again, and to remain with him for ever. But she was ashamed of her changeableness. She thought of how it would be on the following day, if she ordered her boxes to be unpacked again, if before all the servants and before her father himself — no, it must be! she went on. She seated herself in the carriage, the carriage rolled away, and now she was no longer her own, a strange power had taken possession of her ....

It was noon the following day when Irma reached the summer palace. The palace was silent. No one came to meet her but the old house-steward who quickly laid aside his long pipe.

"Where is the court party?" asked the courier.

"They are dining to-day at the 'Devil's pulpit,'" was the answer.

A cry resounded from the garden.

"My Countess — oh my Countess is here!" cried Walpurga, kissing her hands and weeping with delight: "Now my sun is going to rise, it will now be day!"

Irma quieted the excited woman. But she said: "I will go at once to the queen, she alone is at home and she is sitting on the mountain yonder painting. — She does not care for going on these festive excursions, and here every day is a festival."

Irma directed Walpurga not to tell the queen, as she would herself hasten to her. She went to her room, and sat there long and alone absorbed in reverie. She felt as if she had stretched out a friendly hand and no one had grasped it.

Outside they were moving the boxes here and there, and suddenly a remembrance came over her how she once, an orphaned child, had sat in her room dressed in black, and in the adjoining apartment they had moved her mother's coffin.

Why did that occur to her now? She rose up — she could no longer be alone. She quickly changed her dress and hastened to the queen.

The latter saw her in the distance and went to meet her. Irma bent down and wished to kiss her hand — but the queen held her up, embraced her and imprinted a hearty kiss upon her lips.

"You alone might touch the lips my father kissed," said Irma, or rather she said it not. Her lips only slightly moved with the words; but deep within her

soul, rose the thought: "I will rather die a thousand times, than sadden that blameless heart!"

The thought made her countenance brighten, and the queen exclaimed with delight:

"Oh! how beautiful you are now, Countess Irma, you are quite radiant."

Irma cast down her eyes, and knelt by the cradle of the child. Her eyes were so full of brightness, that the child put out his hand as it were to seize them.

"He is right," said Walpurga, "he likes to put out his hand to the light, and I think your eyes have become larger."

Irma went with Walpurga, and excused herself for not having visited the cottage by the lake. She then told her of her friend in the convent.

"And how is your father?" asked Walpurga.

Irma was startled; even the queen had not asked after her father, it was Walpurga alone who did so.

She told her of him, and that he knew Walpurga's mother, and her mother's brother who often burnt pitch in the forest.

"Yes, that is a brother of mother's; then you know him too?"

"I do not, but my father does."

Walpurga told her of Uncle Peter whom they called the little pitch-man, and promised that some day she would send him something — the poor fellow had a sorry life in the world. — It was terrible, she said, that Zenza had had the courage to come to her here in the palace, but the little pitch-man had rather suffer hunger and want.

While Walpurga was still speaking, the queen again approached, and as she came to the cradle the prince

struggled, hands and feet, to get to her. The queen bent down, raised him up, and Walpurga exclaimed:

"There! on the first day that our countess is here again, our prince can sit up for the first time. Yes! she can make every thing go right!"

The queen and Irma sat together in intimate and cheerful converse.

The evening brought a joyful welcome from the visitors to the "Devil's Pulpit." Irma only now heard that her brother was not at the court; he had become acquainted at the baths with the Baroness Steigeneck and her daughter, and was now on a visit to them.

The king greeted Irma very formally, the mistress of the chamber could have found nothing to object to, and how well he could have done otherwise, for the queen said:

"I cannot tell you how happy the arrival of our countess makes me; we had to-day most homelike cordial intercourse together."

In the evening, the king ordered some fireworks to be let off, which he had had prepared for the arrival of the countess. — Far in the surrounding neighbourhood, the people stood looking with delight at the many-coloured sheaves of fire which rose to the sky. At last the name of Countess Irma shone forth, held aloft by a band of mountain marksmen. The fire crackled, from hidden places there resounded music, which was answered from afar by a sustained echo. In the midst of the bright splendour and noisy merriment, Irma was ever thinking the one thought: "How is it now with my father?"

But Count Eberhard sat by the window in his

mountain castle looking out upon the night and the starry sky, and he said to himself:

"Every human being who lives in eternity, is solitary, solitary in himself, as the stars yonder in ether; each one goes his own course, and this is only determined by the attraction and repulsion of the heavenly bodies around ...."

In the night Irma dreamt that a star had fallen from heaven, just upon her breast; she sought to grasp it, but it soared away from her and was transformed into a human figure which stood with averted look and exclaimed, "Thou too art solitary." —

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